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face,  
Which dearly do we love  
to trace,  
As welcome as the flowers  
in May,  
That bloom around us on  
our way.  
As welcome as the wild  
birds' song,  
Which greets us as we go  
along;  
As welcome as the flowers'  
perfume,  
That scents the air in sweet,  
sweet June,  
**Is Eno's famous  
Fruit Salt!**

Cool and refreshing as the  
breeze,  
To Headache it gives cer-  
tain ease;  
Biliousness—it does as-  
suage,  
And cures it both in Youth  
and Age.  
Giddiness it will arrest,  
And give both confidence  
and rest;  
Thirst it will at once allay,  
And what the best in every  
way?  
**Why, Eno's famous  
Fruit Salt!**



The Appetite it will en-  
force,  
And help the system in its  
course;  
Perhaps you've ate or drank  
too much,  
It will restore like magic  
touch.  
Depression with its fearful  
sway,  
It drives electric-like away;  
And if the Blood is found  
impure,  
What effects a perfect cure?  
**Why, Eno's famous  
Fruit Salt!**

Free from Danger, free  
from harm,  
It acts like some magi-  
cian's charm;  
At any time a dainty  
draught,  
Which will dispel disease's  
shaft;  
More priceless than the  
richest gold,  
That ever did its wealth  
unfold;  
And all throughout our  
native land,  
Should always have at  
their command  
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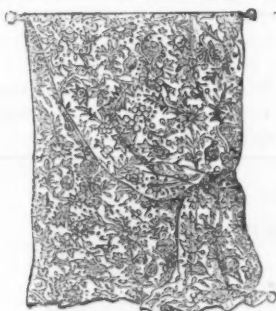


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JULY 1887.

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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

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JULY 1887.

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## *Allan Quatermain :*

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS

*FURTHER ADVENTURES AND DISCOVERIES IN COMPANY WITH  
SIR HENRY CURTIS, BART., COMMANDER JOHN GOOD, R.N.,  
AND ONE UMSLOPOGAAS.*

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD, AUTHOR OF 'SHE,'  
'KING SOLOMON'S MINES,' &c.

*Ex Africa semper aliquid novi.*

### CHAPTER XIX.

#### A STRANGE WEDDING.

ONE person, however, did not succeed in getting out in time before the gates were shut, and that was the high priest Agon, who, as we had every reason to believe, was Sorais' great ally, and the heart and soul of her party. This cunning and ferocious old man had not forgiven us for those hippopotami, or rather that was what he said. What he meant was that he would never brook the introduction of our wider ways of thought and foreign learning and influence while there was a possibility of stamping us out. Also he knew that we possessed a different system of religion, and no doubt was in daily terror of our attempting to introduce it into Zu-Vendis. One day he asked me if we had any religion in our country, and I told him that so far as I could remember we had ninety-five different ones. You might have knocked him down with a feather, and really it is difficult not to pity a high priest of a well-established cult who is haunted



by the possible approach of one or all of ninety-five new religions.

When we knew that Agon was caught, Nyleptha, Sir Henry, and I discussed what was to be done with him. I was for closely incarcerating him, but Nyleptha shook her head, saying that it would produce a disastrous effect throughout the country. 'Ah!' she added, with a stamp of her foot, 'if I win and am once really Queen, I will break the power of those priests, with their rites and revels and dark secret ways.' I only wished that old Agon could have heard her, it would have frightened him.

'Well,' said Sir Henry, 'if we are not to imprison him, I suppose that we may as well let him go. He is of no use here.'

Nyleptha looked at him in a curious sort of a way, and said in a dry little voice, 'Thinkest thou so, my lord?'

'Eh?' said Curtis. 'No, I do not see what is the use of keeping him.'

She said nothing, but continued looking at him in a way that was as shy as it was sweet.

Then at last he understood—'Forgive me, Nyleptha,' he said, rather tremulously. 'Dost thou mean that thou wilt marry me, even now?'

'Nay, I know not, let my lord say,' was her rapid answer; 'but if my lord wills, the priest is there and the altar is there'—pointing to the entrance to a private chapel—'and am I not ready to do the will of my lord? Listen, oh my lord! In eight days or less thou must leave me and go down to war, for thou shalt lead my armies, and in war—men sometimes fall, and if so I would for a little space have had thee all my own, if only for memory's sake;' and the tears overflowed her lovely eyes and rolled down her face like heavy drops of dew down the red heart of a rose.

'Mayhap, too,' she went on, 'I shall lose my crown, and with my crown my life and thine also. Sorais is very strong and very bitter, and if she prevails she will not spare. Who can read the future? Happiness is the world's white bird, that alights seldom, and flies fast and far till one day he is lost in the clouds. Therefore should we hold him fast if by any chance he rests for a little space upon our hand. It is not wise to neglect the present for the future, for who knows what the future will be, Incubu? Let us pluck our flowers while the dew is on them, for when the sun is up they wither, and on the morrow will others bloom that we shall never see.' And she lifted her sweet face to him and

smiled into his eyes, and once more I felt a curious pang of jealousy and turned and went away. They never took much notice of whether I was there or not, thinking, I suppose, that I was an old fool, and that it did not matter one way or the other, and really I believe they were right.

So I went back to our quarters and ruminated over things in general, and watched old Umslopogaas whetting his axe outside the window as a vulture whets his beak beside a dying ox.

And in about an hour's time Sir Henry came tearing over, looking very radiant and wildly excited, and found Good and myself and even Umslopogaas, and asked us if we should like to assist at a real wedding. Of course we said yes, and off we went to the chapel, where we found Agon looking as sulky as any high priest possibly could, and no wonder. It appeared that he and Nyleptha had had a slight difference of opinion about the coming ceremony. He had flatly refused to celebrate it, or to allow any of his priests to do so, whereupon Nyleptha became very angry and told him that she, as Queen, was head of the Church, and meant to be obeyed. Indeed, she played the part of a Zu-Vendi Henry VIII. to perfection, and insisted that, if she wanted to be married, she would be married, and that he should marry her.<sup>1</sup>

He still refused to go through the ceremony, so she clinched her argument thus—

‘Well, I cannot execute a High Priest, because there is an absurd prejudice against it, and I cannot imprison him because all his subordinates would raise a crying that would bring the stars down on Zu-Vendis and crush it; but I *can* leave him to contemplate the altar of the Sun without anything to eat, because that is his natural vocation, and if thou wilt not marry me, O Agon! thou shalt be placed before the altar yonder with nought but a little water till such time as thou hast reconsidered the matter.’

Now, as it happened, Agon had been hurried away that morning without his breakfast, and was already exceedingly hungry, so he presently modified his views and consented to marry them, saying at the same time that he washed his hands of all responsibility in the matter.

So it chanced that presently, attended only by two of her

<sup>1</sup> In Zu-Vendis members of the Royal House can only be married by the High Priest or a formally appointed deputy.—A. Q.

favourite maidens, came the Queen Nyleptha, with happy blushing face and downcast eyes, dressed in pure white, without embroidery of any sort, as seems to be the fashion on these occasions in most countries of the world. She did not wear a single ornament, even her gold circlets were removed, and I thought that if possible she looked more lovely than ever without them, as really superbly beautiful women do.

She came, curtsied low to Sir Henry, and then took his hand and led him up before the altar, and after a little pause, in a slow, clear voice, uttered the following words which are customary in Zu-Vendis if the bride desires and the man consents:—

‘Thou dost swear by the Sun that thou wilt take no other woman to wife unless I lay my hand upon her and bid her come?’

‘I swear it,’ answered Sir Henry; adding in English, ‘One is quite enough for me.’

Then Agon, who had been sulking in a corner near the altar, came forward and gabbled off something into his beard at such a rate that I could not follow it, but it appeared to be an invocation to the Sun to bless the union and make it fruitful. I observed that Nyleptha listened very closely to every word, and afterwards discovered that she was afraid lest Agon should play her a trick, and by going through the invocations backwards divorce instead of marry them. At the end of the invocations they were asked, as in our service, if they took each other for husband and wife, and on their assenting they kissed each other before the altar, and the service was over, so far as their rites were concerned. But it seemed to me that there was yet something wanting, and so I produced a Prayer-book, which has, together with the ‘Ingoldsby Legends,’ that I often read when I lie awake at night, accompanied me in all my later wanderings. I gave it to my poor boy Harry years ago, and after his death I found it among his things and took it back again.

‘Curtis,’ I said, ‘I am not a clergyman, and I do not know if what I am going to propose is allowable—I know it is not legal—but if you and the Queen have no objection I should like to read the English marriage service over you. It is a solemn step which you are taking, and I think that you ought, so far as circumstances will allow, to give it the sanction of your own religion.’

‘I have thought of that,’ he said, ‘and I wish you would. I do not feel half married yet.’

Nyleptha raised no objection, fully understanding that her husband wished to celebrate the marriage according to the rites

prevailing in his own country, and so I set to work and read the service, from 'Dearly beloved' to 'amazement,' as well as I could; and when I came to 'I, Henry, take thee, Nyleptha,' I translated, and also 'I, Nyleptha, take thee, Henry,' which she repeated after me very well. Then Sir Henry took a plain gold ring from his little finger and placed it on hers, and so on to the end. The ring had been Curtis's mother's wedding-ring, and I could not help thinking how astonished the dear old Yorkshire lady would have been if she could have foreseen that her wedding-ring was to serve a similar purpose for Nyleptha, a Queen of the Zu-Vendi.

As for Agon, he was with difficulty kept calm while this second ceremony was going on, for he at once understood that it was religious in its nature, and doubtless bethought him of the ninety-five new faiths which loomed so ominously in his eyes. Indeed, he at once set me down as a rival High Priest, and hated me accordingly. However, in the end off he went, positively bristling with indignation, and I knew that we might look out for danger from his direction.

And off went Good and I, and old Umslopogaas also, leaving the happy pair to themselves, and very low we all felt. Marriages are supposed to be cheerful things, but my experience is that they are very much the reverse to everybody, except perhaps the two people chiefly interested. They mean the breaking-up of so many old ties as well as the undertaking of so many new ones, and there is always something sad about the passing away of the old order. Now to take this case for instance: Sir Henry Curtis is the best and kindest fellow and friend in the world, but he has never been quite the same since that little scene in the chapel. It is always Nyleptha this and Nyleptha that—Nyleptha, in short, from morning till night in one way or another, either expressed or understood. And as for the old friends—well, of course they have taken the place that old friends ought to take, and which ladies are as a rule very careful to see they do take when a man marries, and that is, the second place. Yes, he would be angry if anybody said so, but it is a fact for all that. He is not quite the same, and Nyleptha is very sweet and very charming, but I think that she likes him to understand that she has married *him*, and not Quatermain, Good, and Co. But there! what is the use of grumbling? It is all very right and proper, as any married lady would have no difficulty in explaining, and I am a selfish, jealous old man, though I hope I never show it.

So Good and I went and ate in silence and then indulged in an extra fine flagon of old Zu-Vendian to keep our spirits up, and presently one of our attendants came and told a story that gave us something to think about.

It may, perhaps, be remembered that, after his quarrel with Umslopogaas, Alphonse had gone off in an exceedingly ill temper to sulk over his scratches. Well, it appears that he walked right past the Temple to the Sun, down the wide road on the further side of the slope it crowns, and thence on into the beautiful park, or pleasure gardens, which are laid out just beyond the outer wall. After wandering about there for a little he started to return, but was met near the outer gate by Sorais' train of chariots which were galloping furiously along the great northern road. When she caught sight of Alphonse Sorais halted her train and called to him. On approaching he was instantly seized and dragged into one of the chariots and carried off, 'crying out loudly,' as our informant said, and as from my general knowledge of him I can well believe.

At first I was much puzzled to know what object Sorais could have had in carrying off the poor little Frenchman. She could hardly stoop so low as to try to wreak her fury on one whom she knew was only a servant. It would not be in keeping with her character to do so. At last, however, an idea occurred to me. We three were, as I think I have said, much revered by the people of Zu-Vendis at large, both because we were the first strangers they had ever seen, and because we were supposed to be the possessors of almost supernatural wisdom. Indeed, though Sorais' cry against the 'foreign wolves'—or, to translate it more accurately, 'foreign hyenas'—was sure to go down very well with the nobles and the priests, it was not, as we learnt, likely to be particularly effectual amongst the bulk of the population. The Zu-Vendi people, like the Athenians of old, are ever seeking for some new thing, and just because we were so new our presence was on the whole acceptable to them. Again, Sir Henry's magnificent personal appearance made a deep impression upon a race who possess a greater love of beauty than any other I have ever been acquainted with. Beauty may be prized in other countries, but in Zu-Vendis it is almost worshipped, as indeed the national love of statuary shows. The people said openly in the market-places that there was not a man in the country to touch Curtis in personal appearance, as with the exception of Sorais there was no woman who could compete with Nyleptha, and that therefore it

was meet that they should marry; and that he had been sent by the Sun as a husband for their Queen. Now, from all this it will be seen that the outcry against us was to a considerable extent fictitious and nobody knew it better than Sorais herself. Consequently it struck me that it might have occurred to her that down in the country and among the country people it would be better to place the reason of her conflict with her sister upon other and more general grounds than Nyleptha's marriage with the stranger. It would be easy in a land where there had been so many civil wars to rake out some old cry that would stir up the recollection of buried feuds, and, indeed, she soon found an effectual one. This being so it was of great importance to her to have one of the strangers with her whom she could show to the common people as a great Outlander, who had been so struck by the justice of her cause that he had elected to leave his companions and follow her standard.

This no doubt was the cause of her anxiety to get a hold of Good, whom she would have used till he ceased to be of service and then cast off. But Good having drawn back, she grasped at the opportunity of securing Alphonse, who was not unlike him in personal appearance though smaller, no doubt with the object of showing him off in the cities and country as the great Bougwan himself. I told Good that I thought that that was her plan, and his face was a sight to see—he was so horrified at the idea.

‘What,’ he said, ‘dress up that little wretch to represent me? Why, I shall have to get out of the country! My reputation will be ruined for ever.’

I consoled him as well as I could, but it is not pleasant to be personated all over a strange country by an arrant little coward, and I can quite sympathise with his vexation.

Well, that night Good and I messed, as I have said, in solitary grandeur, feeling very much as though we had just returned from burying a friend instead of marrying one, and next morning the work began in good earnest. The messages and orders which had been despatched by Nyleptha two days before now began to take effect, and multitudes of armed men came pouring into the city. We saw, as may be imagined, but very little of Nyleptha and not too much of Curtis during those next few days, but Good and I sat daily with the council of generals and loyal lords, drawing up plans of action, arranging commissariat matters, the distribution of commands, and a hundred and one other things. Men came



in freely, and all the day long the great roads leading to Milosis were spotted with the banners of lords arriving from their distant places to rally round Nyleptha.

After the first two days it became clear that we should be able to take the field with about forty thousand infantry and twenty thousand cavalry, a very respectable force considering how short was the time we had to collect it, and that about half of the regular army had elected to follow Sorais.

But if our force was large, Sorais' was, according to the reports brought in day by day by our spies, much larger. She had taken up her headquarters at a very strong town called M'Arstuna, situated, as I have said, to the north of Milosis, and all the country-side was flocking to her standard. Nasta had poured down from his highlands and was on his way to join her with no less than twenty-five thousand of his mountaineers, the most terrible soldiers to face in all Zu-Vendis. Another mighty lord, named Belusha, who lived in the great horse-breeding district, had come in with twelve thousand cavalry, and so on. Indeed, what between one thing and another, it seemed certain that she would gather a fully armed host of nearly one hundred thousand men.

And then came news that Sorais was proposing to break up her camp and march on the Frowning City itself, desolating the country as she came. Thereon arose the question whether it would be best to meet her at Milosis or to go out and give her battle. When our opinion was asked upon the subject Good and I unhesitatingly gave it in favour of an advance. If we were to shut ourselves up in the city and wait to be attacked, it seemed to us that our inaction would be set down to fear. It is so important, especially on an occasion of this sort when a very little will suffice to turn men's opinions one way or the other, to be up and doing something. Ardour for a cause will soon evaporate if the cause does not move but sits down to conquer. Therefore we cast our vote for moving out and giving battle in the open, instead of waiting till we were drawn from our walls like a badger from a hole.

Sir Henry's opinion coincided with ours, and so, needless to say, did that of Nyleptha, who, like a flint, was always ready to flash out fire. A great map of the country was brought and spread out before her. About thirty miles this side of M'Arstuna, where Sorais lay, and ninety odd miles from Milosis, the road ran over a neck of land some two and a half miles in width, and



flanked on either side by forest-clad hills which, without being lofty, would, if the road were blocked, be quite impracticable for a great baggage-laden army to cross. She looked earnestly at the map, and then, with a quickness of perception that in some women amounts almost to an instinct, she laid her finger upon this neck of rising ground, and, turning to her husband, said, with a proud air of confidence and a toss of the golden head—

‘Here shalt thou meet Sorais’ armies. I know the spot: here shalt thou meet them, and drive them before thee like dust before the storm.’

But Curtis looked grave and said nothing.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### THE BATTLE OF THE PASS.

It was on the third morning after this incident of the map that Sir Henry and I started. With the exception of a small guard, all the great host had moved on the night before, leaving the Frowning City very silent and empty. Indeed, it was found impossible to leave any garrison, with the exception of a personal guard for Nyleptha, and about a thousand men who from sickness or one cause or another were unable to proceed with the army; but as Milosis was practically impregnable, and as our enemy was in front of and not behind us, this did not so much matter.

Good and Umslopogaas had gone on with the army, but Nyleptha accompanied Sir Henry and myself to the city gates, riding a magnificent white horse called Daylight, which was supposed to be the fleetest and most enduring animal in Zu-Vendis. Her face bore traces of recent weeping, but there were no tears in her eyes now, indeed she was bearing up bravely against what must have been a bitter trial to her. At the gate she reined in her horse and bade us farewell. On the previous day she had reviewed and addressed the officers of the great army, speaking to them such high, eloquent words, and expressing so complete a confidence in their valour and in their ultimate victory, that she quite carried their hearts away, and as she rode from rank to rank they cheered her till the ground shook. And now to-day the same mood seemed to be on her.

‘Fare thee well, Macumazahn!’ she said. ‘Remember, I trust

to thy wits, which are as a needle to a spear-handle compared to those of my people, to save us from Sorais. I know that thou wilt do thy duty.'

I bowed and explained to her my horror of fighting, and my fear lest I should lose my head, at which she laughed gently and turned to Curtis.

'Fare thee well, my lord!' she said. 'Come back with victory, and as a king, or on thy soldiers' spears.'<sup>1</sup>

Sir Henry said nothing, but turned his horse to go; perhaps he had a bit of a lump in his throat. One gets over it afterwards, but these sort of partings are trying when one has only been married a week.

'Here,' added Nyleptha, 'will I greet ye when ye return in triumph. And now, my lords, once more, farewell!'

Then we rode on, but when we had gone a hundred and fifty yards or so, we turned and perceived her still sitting on her horse at the same spot, and looking out after us beneath her hand, and that was the last we saw of her. About a mile farther on, however, we heard galloping behind us, and looking round, saw a mounted soldier coming towards us, leading Nyleptha's matchless steed—Daylight.

'The Queen sends the white stallion as a farewell gift to her Lord Incubu, and bids me tell my lord that he is the fleetest and the most enduring horse in all the land,' said the soldier, bending to his saddle-bow before us.

At first Sir Henry did not want to take the horse, saying that he was too good for such rough work, but I persuaded him to do so, thinking that Nyleptha would be hurt if he did not. Little did I guess at the time what service that noble horse would render in our sorest need. It is curious to look back and realise upon what trivial and apparently accidental circumstances great events frequently turn as easily and naturally as a door on its hinges.

Well, we took the horse, and a beauty he was; it was a perfect pleasure to see him move; and Curtis, having sent back his greetings and thanks, we proceeded on our journey.

By mid-day we overtook the rear-guard of the great army of which Sir Henry then formally took over the command. It was a heavy responsibility, and it oppressed him very much, but the Queen's injunctions on the point were such as did not admit of

<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the Zu-Vendi custom of carrying dead officers on a framework of spears.—A. Q.

being trifled with. He was beginning to find out that greatness has its responsibilities as well as its glories.

Then we marched on without meeting with any opposition, almost indeed without seeing anybody, for the populations of the towns and villages along our route had for the most part fled, fearing lest they should be caught between the two rival armies and ground to powder like grain between the upper and the nether stones.

On the evening of the fourth day, for the progress of so great a multitude was necessarily slow, we camped two miles this side of the neck or ridge I have spoken of, and our outposts brought us word that Sorais with all her power was rolling down upon us, and had pitched her camp that night ten miles the farther side of the neck.

Accordingly before dawn we sent forward fifteen hundred cavalry to seize the position. Scarcely had they occupied it, however, before they were attacked by about as many of Sorais' horsemen, and a very smart little cavalry fight ensued, with a loss to us of about thirty men killed. On the advance of our supports, however, Sorais' force drew off, carrying their dead and wounded with them.

The main body of the army reached the neck about dinner-time, and I must say that Nyleptha's judgment had not failed her: it was an admirable place to give battle in, especially to a superior force.

The road ran down a mile or more, through ground too broken to admit of the handling of any considerable force, till it reached the crest of a great green wave of land, that rolled down a gentle slope to the banks of a little stream, and then rolled away again up a still gentler slope to the plain beyond, the distance from the crest of the land-wave down to the stream being a little over half a mile, and from the stream up to the plain beyond, a trifle less. The length of this wave of land at its highest point, which corresponded exactly with the width of the neck of land between the wooded hills, was about two miles and a quarter, and it was protected on either side by dense, rocky, bush-clad ground, that afforded a most valuable cover to the flanks of the army and rendered it almost impossible for them to be turned.

It was on the hither slope of this neck of land that Curtis encamped his army in the same formation that he had, after consultation with the various generals, Good, and myself, determined that they should occupy in the great pitched battle which now appeared to be imminent.

Our force of sixty thousand men was, roughly speaking, divided

as follows. In the centre was a dense body of twenty thousand foot-soldiers, armed with spears, swords, and hippopotamus-hide shields, breast and back plates.<sup>1</sup> These formed the chest of the army, and were supported by five thousand foot, and three thousand horse in reserve. On either side of this chest were stationed seven thousand horse arranged in deep, majestic squadrons; and beyond and on either side but slightly in front of them again were two bodies, each numbering about seven thousand five hundred spearmen, forming the right and left wings of the army, and each supported by a contingent of some fifteen hundred cavalry. This makes in all sixty thousand men.

Curtis commanded in chief; I was in command of the seven thousand horse between the chest and right wing, which was commanded by Good; and the other battalions and squadrons were entrusted to Zu-Vendi generals.

Scarcely had we taken up our positions before Sorais' vast army began to swarm on the opposite slope about a mile in front of us, till the whole place seemed alive with the multitude of her spear-points, and the ground shook with the tramp of her battalions. It was evident that the spies had not exaggerated, we were outnumbered by at least a third. At first we expected that Sorais was going to attack us at once, as the clouds of cavalry which hung upon her flanks executed some threatening demonstrations, but she thought better of it, and there was no fight that day. As for the formation of her great forces I cannot now describe it with accuracy, and it would only serve to bewilder if I did; but I may say, generally, that in its leading features it resembled our own, only her reserve was much greater.

Opposite our right wing, and forming Sorais' left wing, was a great army of dark, wild-looking men, armed with sword and shield only, which, I was informed, was composed of Nasta's twenty-five thousand savage hillsmen.

'My word, Good,' said I, when I saw them, 'you will catch it to-morrow when those gentlemen charge!' Whereat Good not unnaturally looked rather anxious.

All day we watched and waited, but nothing happened, and at last night fell, and a thousand watch-fires twinkled brightly on the slopes to wane and die one by one like the stars they resembled. As the hours wore on, the silence gradually gathered more deeply over the opposing hosts.

It was a very wearying night, for in addition to the endless

<sup>1</sup> The Zu-Vendi people do not use bows.—A. Q.

things that had to be attended to, there was our gnawing suspense to reckon with. The fray which to-morrow would witness would be so vast, and the slaughter so awful, that stout indeed must the heart have been that was not overwhelmed at the prospect. And when I thought of all that hung upon it, I own I felt ill, and it made me very sad to reflect that these mighty forces were gathered for destruction, simply to gratify the jealous anger of a woman. This was the hidden power which was to send those dense masses of cavalry flashing like human thunderbolts across the plain, and to roll together the fierce battalions as clouds when hurricane meets hurricane. It was a dreadful thought, and set one wondering about the responsibilities of the great ones of the earth. Deep into the night we sat, with pale faces and heavy hearts, and took counsel, whilst the sentries tramped up and down, down and up, and the armed and plumed generals came and went, grim and shadow-like.

And so the time wore away, till everything was ready for the coming slaughter; and I lay down and thought, and tried to get a little rest, but could not sleep for fear of the morrow—for who could say what the morrow would bring forth? Misery and death, this was certain; beyond that we knew not, and I confess I was very much afraid. But as I realised then, it is useless to question that eternal Sphinx, the Future. From day to day she reads aloud the riddles of the yesterday, of which the puzzled worldlings of all ages have not answered one, nor ever will, guess they never so wildly or cry they never so loud.

And so at length I gave up wondering, being forced humbly to leave the issue in the balancing hands of Providence and the morrow.

And at last up came the red sun, and the huge camps awoke with a clash, and a roar, and gathered themselves together for battle. It was a beautiful and awe-inspiring scene, and old Umslopogaas, leaning on his axe, contemplated it with grim delight.

‘Never have I seen the like, Macumazahn, never,’ he said. ‘The battles of my people are as the play of children to what this will be. Thinkest thou that they will fight it out?’

‘Ay,’ I answered, sadly, ‘to the death. Content thyself, “Woodpecker,” for once shalt thou peck thy fill.’

Time went on, and still there was no sign of an attack. A force of cavalry crossed the brook, indeed, and rode slowly along our front, evidently taking stock of our position and numbers. With this we did not attempt to interfere, as our decision was to stand strictly on the defensive, and not to waste a single man.

The men breakfasted and stood to their arms, and the hours wore on. About mid-day, when the men were eating their dinner, for we thought they would fight better on full stomachs, a shout of '*Sorais, Sorais,*' arose like thunder from the enemy's extreme right, and taking the glass I was able to clearly distinguish the 'Lady of the Night,' herself, surrounded by a glittering staff, and riding slowly down the lines of her battalions. And as she went, that mighty, thundering shout rolled along before her like the rolling of ten thousand chariots, or the roaring of the ocean when the gale turns suddenly and carries the noise of it to the listeners' ears, till the earth shook, and the air was full of the majesty of sound.

Guessing that this was a prelude to the beginning of the battle, we remained still and made ready.

We had not long to wait. Suddenly, like flame from a cannon's mouth, out shot two great tongue-like forces of cavalry, and came charging down the slope towards the little stream, slowly at first, but gathering speed as they came. Before they got to the stream, orders reached me from Sir Henry, who evidently feared that the shock of such a charge, if allowed to fall unbroken upon our infantry, would be too much for them, to send five thousand sabres to meet the force opposite to me, at the moment when it began to mount the steepest of the rise about four hundred yards from our lines. This I did, remaining behind myself with the rest of my men.

Off went the five thousand horsemen, drawn up in a wedge-like form, and I must say that the general in command handled them very ably. Starting at a hand gallop, for the first three hundred yards, he rode straight at the tip of the tongue-shaped mass of cavalry which, numbering, so far as I could judge, about eight thousand sabres, was advancing to charge us. Then he suddenly swerved to the right and put on the pace, and I saw the great wedge curl round, and before the foe could check himself and turn to meet it, strike him about halfway down his length, with a crashing rending sound, like that of the breaking-up of vast sheets of ice. In sank the great wedge, into his heart, and as it cut its way hundreds of horsemen were thrown up on either side of it, just as the earth is thrown up by a ploughshare, or more like still, as the foaming water curls over beneath the bows of a rushing ship. In, yet in, vainly does the tongue twist its ends round in agony, like an injured snake, and strive to protect its centre; still farther in, by Heaven! right through, and so, amid cheer after cheer from our watching thousands, back again upon



the severed ends, beating them down, driving them as a gale drives spray, till at last, amidst the rushing of hundreds of riderless horses, the flashing of swords, and the victorious clamour of their pursuers, the great force crumples up like an empty glove, then turns and gallops pell-mell for safety back to its own lines.

I do not think it reached them more than two thirds as strong as it went out ten minutes before. The lines, which were now advancing to the attack, opened and swallowed them up, and my force returned, having only suffered a loss of about five hundred men—not much, I thought, considering the fierceness of the struggle. I could also see that the opposing bodies of cavalry on our left wing were drawing back, but how the fight went with them I do not quite know. It is as much as I can do to describe what took place immediately around me.

By this time the dense masses of the enemy's left, composed almost entirely of Nasta's swordsmen, were across the little stream, and with alternate yells of 'Nasta' and 'Sorais,' with dancing banners and gleaming swords, were swarming up towards us like ants.

Again I received orders to try and check this movement, and also the main advance against the chest of our army, by means of cavalry charges, and this I did to the best of my ability, by continually sending squadrons of about a thousand sabres out against them. These squadrons did the enemy much damage, and it was a glorious sight to see them flash down the hill side, and bury themselves like a living knife in the heart of the foe. But, also, we lost many men, for after the experience of a couple of these charges, which had drawn a sort of bloody St. Andrew's cross of dead and dying through the centre of Nasta's host, our foes no longer attempted to offer an unyielding front to their irresistible weight, but opened out to let the rush go through, throwing themselves on the ground and hamstringing hundreds of horses as they passed.

And so, notwithstanding all that we could do, the enemy drew nearer, till at last he hurled himself upon Good's force of seven thousand five hundred regulars, who were drawn up to receive them in three strong squares. About the same time, too, an awful and heartshaking roar told me that the main battle had closed in on the centre and extreme left. I raised myself in my stirrups and looked down to my left; so far as the eye could see there was a long dazzling shimmer of steel as the sun glanced upon falling sword and thrusting spear.

To and fro swung the contending lines in that dread struggle, now giving way, now gaining a little in the mad yet ordered confusion of attack and defence. But it was as much as I could do to keep count of what was happening to our own wing; and, as for the moment the cavalry had fallen back under cover of Good's three squares, I had a fair view of this.

Nasta's wild swordsmen were now breaking in red waves against the sullen rock-like squares. Time after time did they yell out their war-cries, and hurl themselves furiously against the long triple ridges of spear-points, only to be rolled back as billows are when they meet the cliff.

And so for four long hours the battle raged almost without a pause, and at the end of that time, if we had gained nothing we had lost nothing. Two attempts to turn our left flank by forcing a way through the wood by which it was protected, had been defeated; and as yet Nasta's swordsmen had, notwithstanding their desperate efforts, entirely failed to break Good's three squares, though they had thinned their numbers by quite a third.

As for the chest of the army, where Sir Henry was with his staff and Umslopogaas, it had suffered dreadfully, but it had held its own with honour, and the same may be said of our left battle.

At last the attacks slackened, and Sorais' army drew back, having, I began to think, had enough of it. On this point, however, I was soon undeceived, for, splitting up her cavalry into comparatively small squadrons, she charged us furiously with them all along the line, and then once more sullenly rolled her tens of thousands of sword and spear men down upon our weakened squares and squadrons; Sorais herself directing the movement, and, fearless as a lioness, heading the main attack. On they came like an avalanche,—I saw her golden helm gleaming in the van—our counter charges of cavalry entirely failing to check their forward sweep. Now they had struck us, and our centre bent in like a bow beneath the weight of their rush. It parted, and had not the ten thousand men in reserve charged down to its support, it must have been utterly destroyed. As for Good's three squares, they were swept backwards like boats upon an incoming tide, and the foremost one was burst into and lost half its remaining men. But the effort was too fierce and terrible to last. Suddenly the battle came, as it were, to a turning point, and for a minute or two stood still.

Then it began to move towards Sorais' camp. Just then, too, Nasta's fierce and almost invincible highlanders, either because they were disheartened by their losses or by way of a ruse, fell

back, and the remains of Good's gallant squares, leaving the positions they had held for so many hours, cheered wildly, and rashly followed them down the slope, whereon the swarms of swordsmen turned to envelop them, and once more flung themselves upon them with a yell. Taken thus on every side, what remained of the first square was quickly destroyed, and I perceived that the second, in which I could see Good himself mounted on a large horse, was on the point of annihilation. A few more minutes and it was broken, its streaming colours sank, and I lost sight of Good in the confused and hideous slaughter that ensued.

Presently, however, a cream-coloured horse with a snow-white mane and tail burst from the ruins of the square and came rushing past me riderless and with wide streaming reins, and in it I recognised the charger that Good had been riding. Then I hesitated no longer, but taking with me half my effective cavalry force, which now amounted to between four and five thousand men, I commended myself to God, and, without waiting for orders, I charged straight down upon Nasta's swordsmen. Seeing me coming, and being warned by the thunder of my horses' hoofs, the majority of them faced round, and gave us a right warm welcome. Not an inch would they yield; in vain did we hack and trample them down as we ploughed a broad red furrow through their thousands; they seemed to re-arise by hundreds, driving their terrible sharp swords into our horses, or severing their hamstrings, and then hacking the troopers who came to the ground with them almost into pieces. My horse was speedily killed under me, but luckily I had a fresh one, my own favourite, a coal-black mare Nyleptha had given me, being held in reserve behind, and on this I afterwards mounted. Meanwhile I had to get along as best I could, for I was pretty well lost sight of by my men in the mad confusion of the moment. My voice, of course, could not be heard in the midst of the clanging of steel and the shrieks of rage and agony. Presently I found myself mixed up with the remnants of the square which had formed round its leader Good, and was fighting desperately for existence. I stumbled against somebody, and glancing down, caught sight of Good's eyeglass. He had been beaten to his knee. Over him was a great fellow swinging a heavy sword. Somehow I managed to run the man through with the sime I had taken from the Masai whose hand I had cut off; but as I did so, he dealt me a frightful blow on the left side and breast with the sword, and though my chain shirt saved my life,

I felt that I was badly hurt. For a minute I fell on to my hands and knees among the dead and dying, and turned sick and faint. When I came to again I saw that Nasta's spearmen, or rather those of them who remained, were retreating back across the stream, and that Good was there by me smiling sweetly.

'Near go that,' he shouted; 'but all's well that ends well.'

I assented, but I could not help feeling that it had not ended well for me. I was sorely hurt.

Just then we saw the smaller bodies of cavalry stationed on our extreme right and left, and which were now reinforced by the three thousand sabres which we had held in reserve, flash out like arrows from their posts and fall upon the disordered flanks of Sorais' forces, and that charge decided the issue of the battle. In another minute or two the enemy was in slow and sullen retreat across the little stream where they once more re-formed. Then came another lull, during which I managed to get my second horse, and received my orders to advance from Sir Henry, and then with one fierce deep-throated roar, with a waving of banners and a wide flashing of steel, the remains of our army took the offensive and began to sweep, down, slowly indeed, but irresistibly, from the positions they had so gallantly held all day.

At last it was our turn to attack.

On we moved, over the piled up masses of dead and dying, and were approaching the stream, when suddenly I perceived an extraordinary sight. Galloping wildly towards us, his arms tightly clasped around his horse's neck, against which his blanched cheek was tightly pressed, was a man arrayed in the full costume of a Zu-Vendi general, but in whom, as he came nearer, I recognised none other than our lost Alphonse. It was impossible even then to mistake those curling black mustachios. In a minute he was tearing through our ranks and narrowly escaped being cut down, till at last somebody caught his horse's bridle, and he was brought to me just as a momentary halt occurred in our advance to allow what remained of our shattered squares to form into line.

'Ah, monsieur,' he gasped out in a voice that was nearly inarticulate with fright, 'grace to the sky, it is you! Ah, what I have endured! But you win, monsieur, you win; they fly, the laches. But listen, monsieur—I forget, it is no good; the Queen is to be murdered to-morrow at the first light in the palace of Milosis; her guards will leave their posts, and the priests are going to kill her. Ah yes! they little thought it, but I was ensconced beneath a banner, and I heard it all.'

‘What?’ I said, horror-struck; ‘what do you mean?’

‘What I say. Monsieur, that devil of a Nasta he went last night to settle the affair with the Archbishop [Agon]. The guard will leave open the little gate leading from the great stair and go away, and Nasta and Agon’s priests will come in and kill her. Themselves they would not kill her.’

‘Come with me,’ I said, and, shouting to the staff-officer next me to take over the command, I snatched his bridle and galloped as hard as I could for the spot, between a quarter and half a mile off, where I saw the royal pennon flying, and where I knew that I should find Curtis if he were still alive. On we tore, our horses clearing heaps of dead and dying men, and splashing through pools of blood, on past the long broken lines of spearmen, to where, mounted on the white stallion Nyleptha had sent to him as a parting gift, I saw Sir Henry’s form towering above the generals who surrounded him.

Just as we reached him the advance began again. A bloody cloth was bound around his head, but I saw that his eye was as bright and keen as ever. Beside him was old Umslopogaas, his axe red with blood, but looking quite fresh and uninjured.

‘What’s wrong, Quatermain?’ he shouted.

‘Everything. There is a plot to murder the Queen to-morrow at dawn. Alphonse here, who has just escaped from Sorais, has overheard it all,’ and I rapidly repeated to him what the Frenchman had told me.

Curtis’s face turned deadly pale and his jaw dropped.

‘At dawn,’ he gasped, ‘and it is now sunset; it dawns before four, and we are nearly a hundred miles off—nine hours at the outside. What is to be done?’

An idea entered into my head. ‘Is that horse of yours fresh?’ I said.

‘Yes, I have only just got on to him—when my last was killed, and he has been fed.’

‘So is mine. Get off him, and let Umslopogaas mount; he can ride well. We will be at Milosis before dawn, or if we are not—well, we cannot help it. No, no; it is impossible for you to leave now. You would be seen, and it would turn the fate of the battle. It is not half won yet. The soldiers would think you were making a bolt of it. Quick now.’

In a moment he was down, and at my bidding Umslopogaas sprang into the empty saddle.

‘Now farewell,’ I said. ‘Send a thousand horsemen with

remounts after us in an hour if possible. Stay, despatch a general to the left wing to take over the command and explain my absence.'

'You will do your best to save her, Quatermain?' he said in a broken voice.

'Ay, that I will. Go on; you are being left behind.'

He cast one glance at us, and accompanied by his staff galloped off to join the advance, which by this time was fording the little brook that now ran red with the blood of the fallen.

As for Umslopogaas and myself we left that dreadful field as arrows leave a bow, and in a few minutes had passed right out of the sight of slaughter, the smell of blood, and the turmoil and shouting, which only came to our ears as a faint, far-off roaring like the sound of distant breakers.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### AWAY! AWAY!

AT the top of the rise we halted for a second to breathe our horses; and, turning, glanced at the battle beneath us, which, illumined as it was by the fierce rays of the sinking sun staining the whole scene red, looked from where we were more like some wild titanic picture than an actual hand-to-hand combat. The distinguishing scenic effect from that distance was the countless distinct flashes of light reflected from the swords and spears, otherwise the panorama was not so grand as might have been expected. The great green lap of sward in which the struggle was being fought out, the bold round outline of the hills behind, and the wide sweep of the plain beyond, seemed to dwarf it; and what was tremendous enough, when one was in it, grew insignificant when viewed from the distance. But is it not thus with all the affairs and doings of our race about which we blow the loud trumpet and make such a fuss and a worry? How utterly antlike, and morally and physically insignificant, must they seem to the calm eyes that watch them from the arching depths above!

'We win the day, Macumazahn,' said old Umslopogaas, taking in the whole situation with a glance of his practised eye. 'Look, the Lady of the Night's forces give on every side, there is no stiffness left in them, they bend like hot iron, they are fighting with but half a heart. But alas! the battle will in a manner be drawn, for the darkness gathers, and the regiments will not be



able to follow and slay!'—and he shook his head sadly. 'But,' he added, 'I do not think that they will fight again, we have fed them with too strong a meat. Ah, it is well to have lived! At last I have seen a fight worth seeing.'

By this time we were on our way again, and as we went side by side I told him what our mission was, and how that, if it failed, all the lives that had been lost that day would have been lost in vain.

'Ah!' he said, 'nigh on a hundred miles and no horses but these, and to be there before the dawn! Well—away! away! man can but try, Macumazahn; and mayhap we shall be there in time to split that old "witch-finder's" [Agon's] skull for him. Once he wanted to burn us, the old "rainmaker," did he? And now he would set a snare for my mother [Nyleptha], would he? Good! So sure as my name is the name of the Woodpecker, so surely, be my mother alive or dead, will I split him to the beard. Ay, by T'Chaka's head I swear it!' and he shook Inkosi-kaas as he galloped. By now the darkness was closing in, but fortunately there would be a moon later, and the road was good.

On we sped through the twilight, the two splendid horses we bestrode had got their wind by this, and were sweeping along with a wide steady stride that neither failed nor varied for mile upon mile. Down the sides of slopes we galloped, across wide vales that stretched to the foot of far-off hills. Nearer and nearer grew the blue hills, now we were travelling up their steepes, and now we were over, and passing towards others that sprang up like visions in the far, faint distance beyond.

On, never pausing or drawing rein through the perfect quiet of the night, that was set like a song to the falling music of our horses' hoofs; on, past deserted villages, where only some forgotten starving dog howled a melancholy welcome; on, past lonely moated dwellings; on, through the white patchy moonlight that lay coldly upon the wide bosom of the earth as though there was no warmth in it; on, knee to knee, for hour after hour.

We spake not, but bent us forward on the necks of those two glorious horses, and listened to their deep, long-drawn breaths as they filled their great lungs, and to the regular unfaltering ring of their round hoofs. Grim and black indeed did old Umslopogaas look beside me, mounted upon the great white horse, like Death in the Revelation of St. John, as now and again, lifting his fierce set face, he gazed out along the road, and pointed with his axe towards some distant rise or house.

And so on, still on, without break or pause for hour after hour.

At last I felt that even the splendid animal that I rode was beginning to give out. I looked at my watch, it was nearly midnight, and we were considerably more than half way. On the top of a rise was a little spring, which I remembered because I had slept by it a few nights before, and here I motioned to Umslopogaas to pull up, having determined to give the horses and ourselves ten minutes to breathe in. He did so, and we dismounted, that is to say Umslopogaas did, and then helped me off, for what with fatigue, stiffness, and the pain of my wound, I could not do so for myself, and the gallant horses stood panting there, resting first one leg and then another, while the sweat fell drip, drip, from them, and the steam rose and hung in pale clouds in the still night air.

Leaving Umslopogaas to hold the horses, I hobbled to the spring and drank deep of its sweet waters. I had had nothing but a single mouthful of wine since mid-day when the battle began, and I was parched up, though my fatigue was too great to allow me to feel hungry. Then, having laved my fevered head and hands, I returned, and the Zulu went and drank. Next we allowed the horses to take a couple of mouthfuls each—no more; and oh, what a struggle we had to get the poor beasts away from the water! There were yet two minutes, and I employed it in hobbling up and down to try and relieve my stiffness, and in inspecting the condition of the horses. My mare, gallant animal though she was, was evidently much distressed; she hung her head, and her eye looked sick and dull; but Daylight, Nyleptha's glorious horse—who, if he is served aright, should, like the steeds who saved the great Rameses in his need, feed for the rest of his days out of a golden manger—was still, comparatively speaking, fresh, notwithstanding that he had had by far the heavier weight to carry. He was 'tucked up,' indeed, and his legs were weary, but his eye was bright and clear, and he held his shapely head up and gazed out into the darkness round him in a way that seemed to say that whoever failed *he* was good for those five-and-forty miles that yet lay between us and Milosis. Then Umslopogaas helped me into the saddle and—vigorous old savage that he was!—vaulted into his own without touching a stirrup, and we were off once more; slowly at first, till the horses got into their stride, and then more swiftly. So we passed over another ten miles, and then came a long, weary rise of some six or seven miles, and three times did my poor black mare nearly come to the ground with me. But on the top she seemed to

gather herself together, and rattled down the slope with long, convulsive strides, breathing in gasps. We did that three or four miles more swiftly than any since we had started on our wild ride, but I felt it to be a last effort, and I was right. Suddenly my poor horse took the bit between her teeth and bolted furiously along a stretch of level ground for some three or four hundred yards, and then with two or three jerky strides pulled herself up and fell with a crash right on to her head, I rolling myself free as she did so. As I struggled on to my feet the brave beast raised her head and looked at me with piteous bloodshot eyes, and then her head dropped with a groan and she was dead. Her heart was broken.

Umslopogaas pulled up beside the carcase, and I looked at him in dismay. There were still more than twenty miles to do by dawn, and how were we to do it with one horse? It seemed hopeless, but I had forgotten the old Zulu's extraordinary running powers.

Without a single word he sprang from the saddle and began to hoist me into it.

'What wilt thou do?' I asked.

'Run,' he answered, seizing my stirrup leather.

Then off we went again almost as fast as before; and oh, the relief it was to me to get that change of horses! Anybody who has ever ridden against time will know what it meant.

Daylight sped along at a long stretching hand-gallop, giving the gaunt Zulu a lift at every stride. It was a wonderful thing to see old Umslopogaas run mile after mile, his lips slightly parted and his nostrils agape like the horse's. Every five miles or so we stopped for a few minutes to let him get his breath, and then flew on again.

'Canst thou go farther,' I said at the third of these stoppages, 'or shall I leave thee to follow me?'

He pointed with his axe to a dim mass before us. It was the Temple of the Sun now not more than five miles away.

'I reach it or I die,' he gasped.

Oh, that last five miles! The skin was rubbed from the inside of my legs, and every movement of my horse gave me anguish. Nor was that all. I was exhausted with toil, want of food and sleep, and also suffering very much from the blow I had received on my left side; it seemed as though a piece of bone or something was slowly piercing into my lung. Poor Daylight, too, was pretty nearly finished, and no wonder. But there was a smell of dawn in the air, and we might not stay; better that all three

of us should die upon the road than that we should linger while there was life in us. The air was thick and heavy, as it sometimes is before the dawn breaks, and—another infallible sign in certain parts of Zu-Vendis that sunrise is at hand—hundreds of little spiders pendant on the end of long tough webs were floating about in it. These early-rising creatures, or rather their webs, caught upon the horse's and our own forms by scores, and as we had neither the time nor the energy to brush them off, we rushed along, covered with hundreds of long grey threads that streamed out a yard or more behind us, and a very strange appearance they must have given us.

And now before us are the huge brazen gates of the outer wall of the Frowning City, and a new and horrible doubt strikes me: What if they will not let us in?

'*Open! open!*' I shout imperiously, at the same time giving the royal password. '*Open! open!* a messenger, a messenger with tidings of the war.'

'What news?' cried the guard. 'And who art thou that ridest so madly, and who is that whose tongue lolls out—' and it actually did—'and who runs by thee like a dog by a chariot?'

'It is the Lord Macumazahn, and with him is his dog, his black dog. *Open! open!* I bring tidings.'

The great gates ran back on their rollers, and the drawbridge fell with a rattling crash, and we dashed on through the one and over the other.

'What news, my lord, what news?' cried the guard.

'Incubu rolls Sorais back, as the wind a cloud,' I answered, and was gone.

One more effort, gallant horse, and yet more gallant man!

So fall not now, Daylight; and hold thy life in thee for fifteen short minutes more, old Zulu war-dog, and ye shall both live for ever in the annals of the land.

On, clattering through the sleeping streets. We are passing the Flower Temple now—one mile more, only one little mile—hold on, keep your life in ye, see the houses run past of themselves. Up, good horse, up, there—but fifty yards now. Ah! you see your stables and stagger on gallantly.

'Thank God! the palace at last!' and see the first arrows of the dawn are striking on the temple's golden dome.<sup>1</sup> But shall I get in here, or is the deed done and the way barred?

<sup>1</sup> Of course, the roof of the Temple being so high, caught the light some time before the breaking of the dawn.—A. Q.

Once more I give the password and shout '*Open! open!*'

No answer, and my heart grows very faint.

Again I call, and this time a single voice replies, and to my joy I recognise it as belonging to Kara, a fellow-officer of Nyleptha's guards, a man I know to be as honest as the light—indeed, the same whom Nyleptha had sent to arrest Sorais on the day she fled to the temple.

'Is it thou, Kara?' I cry. 'I am Macumazahn. Bid the guard let down the bridge and throw wide the gate. Quick, quick!'

Then followed a space that seemed to me endless, but at length the bridge fell and one half of the gate opened and we got into the courtyard, where at last poor Daylight fell down beneath me, as I thought, dead. I struggled free, and leaning against a post looked around. Except Kara, there was nobody to be seen, and his look was wild, and his garments were all torn. He had opened the gate and let down the bridge alone, and was now getting them up and shut again (as, owing to a very ingenious arrangement of cranks and levers, one man could easily do, and indeed generally did do).

'Where are the guard?' I gasped, fearing his answer as I never feared anything before.

'I know not,' he answered; 'two hours ago as I slept was I seized and bound by the watch under me, and but now, this very moment, have I freed myself with my teeth. I fear, I greatly fear, that we are betrayed.'

His words gave me fresh energy. Catching him by the arm, I staggered, followed by Umslopogaas, who reeled after us like a drunken man, through the courtyards, up the great hall, which was silent as the grave, towards the Queen's sleeping-place.

We reached the first ante-room—no guards; the second—still no guards. Oh, surely the thing was done! We were too late after all, too late. The silence and solitude of those great chambers was dreadful, and weighed me down like an evil dream. On, right into Nyleptha's chamber we rushed and staggered, sick at heart, fearing the very worst; we saw there was a light in it, ay, and a figure bearing the light. Oh, thank God, it is the White Queen herself, the Queen unharmed! There she stands in her night-gear, roused, by the clatter of our coming, from her bed, the heaviness of sleep yet in her eyes, and a red blush of fear and shame mantling her lovely breast and cheek.

'Who is it?' she cries. 'What means this? Oh, Macumazahn, is it thou? Why lookest thou so wildly? Thou comest as one

bearing evil tidings—and my lord—oh, tell me not my lord is dead—not dead!’ she wailed, wringing her white hands.

‘I left Incubu wounded, but leading the advance against Sorais last night at sundown, therefore let thy heart have rest. Sorais is beaten back all along her lines, and thy arms prevail.’

‘I knew it,’ she cried in triumph. ‘I knew that he would win; and they called him Outlander, and shook their wise heads when I gave him the command. Last night at sundown, sayest thou, and it is not yet dawn? Surely——’

‘Throw a cloak around thee, Nyleptha,’ I broke in, ‘and give us wine to drink; ay, and call thy maidens quick if thou wouldst save thyself alive. Nay, stay not.’

Thus adjured, she ran and called through the curtains towards some room beyond, and then hastily put on her sandals and a thick cloak, by which time a dozen or so of half-dressed women were pouring into the room.

‘Follow us and be silent,’ I said to them as they gazed with wondering eyes clinging one to another. So we went into the first ante-room.

‘Now,’ I said, ‘give us wine to drink and food, if ye have it, for we are near to death.’

The room was used as a mess-room for the officers of the guards, and from a cupboard some flagons of wine and some cold flesh were brought forth, and Umslopogaas and I drank, and felt life flow back into our veins as the good red wine went down.

‘Hark to me, Nyleptha,’ I said, as I put down the empty tankard. ‘Hast thou here among these thy waiting-ladies any two of discretion?’

‘Ay,’ she said, ‘surely.’

‘Then bid them go out by the side entrance to any citizens whom thou canst bethink thee of as men loyal to thee, and pray them come armed, with all honest folk that they can gather, to rescue thee from death. Nay, question not; do as I say, and quickly. Kara, here, will let out the maids.’

She turned, and selecting two of the crowd of damsels, repeated the words I had uttered, giving them besides a list of the names of the men to whom each should run.

‘Go swiftly and secretly; go for your very lives,’ I added.

In another moment they had left with Kara, whom I told to rejoin us at the door leading from the great courtyard on to the stairway as soon as he had made fast behind the girls. Thither, too, Umslopogaas and I made our way, followed by the Queen and



her women. As we went we tore off mouthfuls of food, and between them I told her what I knew of the danger which encompassed her, and how we had found Kara, and how all the guards and menservants were gone, and she was alone with her women in that great place; and she told me, too, that a rumour had spread through the town that our army had been utterly destroyed, and that Sorais was marching in triumph on Milosis, and how in consequence thereof all men had fallen away from her.

Though all this takes some time to tell, we had not been but six or seven minutes in the palace; and, notwithstanding that the golden roof of the temple, being very lofty, was ablaze with the rays of the rising sun, it was not yet dawn, nor would be for another ten minutes. We were in the courtyard now, and here my wound pained me so that I had to take Nyleptha's arm, while Umslopogaas rolled along after us eating as he went.

Now we were across it, and had reached the narrow doorway through the palace wall that opened on to the mighty stair.

I looked through and stood aghast, as well I might. The door was gone, and so were the outer gates of bronze—entirely gone. They had been taken from their hinges, and, as we afterwards found, hurled from the stairway to the ground two hundred feet beneath. There in front of us was the semicircular standing-space, about twice the size of a large oval dining-table, and the ten curved black marble steps leading on to the main stair—and that was all.

*(To be continued.)*

## *Women's Work and Women's Wages.*

WHEN the incredible has happened once it becomes almost reasonable to expect that it may happen again. It has happened once for an imaginative writer to trace, regardless of expense, the outlines of an altogether ideal scheme for making life less uniformly dismal for two or three millions of his fellow-mortals. Fortune aiding the seductiveness of Mr. Besant's pen, East London will shortly be in possession of as fair an imitation of a 'Palace of Delight' as can well be set up in bricks and mortar. The critics who denounce all 'novels with a purpose' would perhaps have forgiven the author of that 'impossible story' concerning 'all sorts and conditions of men' had he been content to plead immunity for a first offence and agreed not to trespass again. But, as the readers of LONGMAN best know, Mr. Besant's imagination was still happily unexhausted, and after seeing visions and dreaming dreams about the holiday hours of Whitechapel, he has gone on to take the same liberty with the working-days of Hoxton. The newspapers and the novel-readers don't half like it. People do *not* like being made uncomfortable, and when a favourite author turns upon them, and actually produces a dim feeling of *malaise* in the recesses of well-bred easy-going consciences, they nourish a certain sense of injury. They can't say that Mr. Besant is dull, or his characters unreal, or his plot more impossible than he intends. But they grumble at the novelist with a purpose, and protest against being made uncomfortable for nothing; they complain of the mixture of powder and jam, and pretend that they would rather take their morals and economics unsweetened in church or lecture-rooms. Of course we know better. No one sits under preachers or professors who really succeed in making them uncomfortable, and the novelist who gets read in spite of that achievement has really won so great a victory, that he may, Napoleon-like, blot the word 'impossible' out of his dictionary.

In plain fact, anything is possible, however large, difficult, or distant, if the object is clearly defined and resolutely pursued. At one time it would have been thought wildly impossible to teach every child in England to read; but as soon as the State determined that schools enough for the purpose should be built, the impossible ceased to be even difficult. It would be just as easy to provide free amusements, after the Beaumont Palace fashion, for the whole population as to provide elementary schooling. But free amusements are of no use to those who work sixteen hours out of the twenty-four for wages that only buy bread and tea, and it takes a robust imagination like Mr. Besant's to conceive so radical a reconstruction of the social order as would be involved in halving the work and doubling the wages of Melenda and her tribe. Yet such a reconstruction is in the nature of things quite possible, and not more difficult than the complete revolution in our industrial economy effected by the introduction of the factory system. It only requires such a *consensus* of opinion as that which passed the Education Act of 1870, such a *consensus* of goodwill as that which has founded the People's Palace, in fact, such concerted action upon the labour market as can be brought to bear when ten thousand Valentines and a hundred thousand Melendas have agreed upon a plan of campaign.

Now that the Beaumont Palace is a fact, there are plenty of good people who say, quite truly, that they wished and asked for something of the kind long before Mr. Besant's book was published; and of course his book would not have produced its effect if people's minds had not been already predisposed to accept such a scheme as soon as it was set forth in sufficiently lively and attractive colours. Similarly, we should have no hope of any corresponding outcome from 'The Children of Gibeon' if there were not already amongst men and women of all classes a strong and growing feeling that something must be done to alter and amend the conditions of women's work.

The object of these pages is to describe one attempt in particular which has been made to grapple with this problem, and to suggest the possibility of a wider organisation to concentrate and direct all the unemployed and misguided sympathy with the hardships of the working poor which is really floating about in the social atmosphere, notwithstanding 'that strange hardness of woman's heart towards women' which Mr. Besant justly denounces as 'a wonderful and monstrous thing.'

If women work for wages like men, and are liable to have their wages reduced through the competition of employers for custom and the competition of workers for employment, they must at least endeavour to protect themselves, as men do, by union and combination, against the forces which singly they are unable to resist. Men, it is said, by the help of trade unions, have shortened their hours of work and raised, or prevented the reduction of, the general rate of wages: women in the same position, to obtain the same results, must use the same means. But women of all classes are a shade more sensitive to the breath of public opinion than men are, and working women are not likely to seek such help as trade unionism can give them until they are well assured that the last remains of ancient prejudice against trade unionism have been dispelled. Everyone agrees now that trade unions are lawful, but many good people still entertain a lingering doubt as to the expediency or utility of their action, and this doubt must be removed before even the women who most need protection can be induced to seek it through combination.

The trade unions of men have always had two chief objects in view—to shorten the hours of work (practically whenever possible to a ‘nine hours day’), and to fix a *minimum* rate of wages to be received by all ordinary workers, such as is considered sufficient for the maintenance of the worker and his family. Starting from the sound principle that work is a good thing, the early unionists were blamed for making rules which prevented their members from working as a rule more than certain specified hours; ladies and gentlemen of leisure asked quite sincerely, Is it not a shocking thing, if an industrious man wants to work extra hours for extra money for the sake of his family, that he should be forbidden to do so by a tyrannical society? Even now it may seem rather paradoxical to maintain that it is the idle and drunken, not the industrious and thrifty workers, who as a rule like working overtime. And yet the fact is so. After a nine hours day, the walk home, the evening wash, and the family supper, how much time is there left for the ideal British workman to rest by the domestic hearth and enjoy the company of his wife and children? A bare hour or two at most before bed-time; and if a man’s regular wages will not allow him to indulge in this one cheap and innocent and wholesome pleasure, they are obviously too low, and very low wages are fatal not only to domestic happiness but to industry and thrift. For suppose the day’s work

extends over twelve or fourteen hours instead of nine, the man leaves his workshop tired out, physically faint and nervously irritable, and must stop for 'a glass' before he feels equal to the tramp home; he gets in late, too tired to eat; and the wife, who never knows when to expect him, has, of course, got supper too early or too late, and is herself worried with waiting—with the daily result of probable quarrels and certain drink. Habitual long hours and habitual drinking always go together. The clever, idle, thriftless worker, who does not dislike working overtime, does not, and never did, spend his extra earnings on his family. He either drinks the surplus as he earns it, or he saves up a few pounds from high wages to spend 'upon the spree,' only returning to work when all the family property has been pawned, and he again begins to work double tides to keep himself going with drink while he is redeeming it.

At a time when philanthropists could only shake their heads at the improvidence and intemperance of the poor, and lament that they were none the better for high wages when they got them, the early unionists set themselves to remove the chief cause of these evils in excessive and irregular hours of labour. *They* knew that overwork was neither a cause nor an effect of industry, and they were moved almost exclusively by motives which every philanthropist must approve, when he understands them, in their struggles against habitual overtime. When engineers worked as long hours as tailors they used to drink as much or more; now the engineers have shortened their hours and their drink-bill, and the tailors have not. Human nature is responsible for the result, which is not even peculiar to masculine depravity. Women are demoralised just as men are both by chronic long hours and by the extra wages earned at the expense of chronic overtime; and there are still clever shirtmakers and tailoresses who alternate between weeks of intemperate work and intemperate play.

Evidently, then, benevolent public opinion must go heartily with trade unions in their efforts to secure a moderate and uniform length for the day's work.

The case for a *minimum* rate of wages is even simpler. Trade unions have never wished to have all workers, good or bad, paid at the same rate; all they ask is that the average worker, the man who is thought good enough to be employed, shall be paid at some certain rate which has been accepted in the trade as just sufficient for a decent maintenance. Extra skill and extra speed may be paid for extra, as much as the employer pleases; what

trade unionists object to is paying ordinary wages to the extra good hands, and something less than that to the ordinary ones. Ordinary folk are the rule, and if all ordinary workers were to go on half rations it would be a bad look-out for most of us.

Thirteen years ago, a young woman of great energy and ability, who had had singular facilities for approaching the labour question from the worker's side, began for the first time seriously to advocate trade unionism as a remedy for the notorious evils affecting the industrial position of women. She was the daughter of a highly-educated elementary schoolmaster; and on her father's death, when quite a young girl, she was engaged as secretary, or assistant, by an elderly lady, who herself acted as clerk to the secretary of the Workmen's Club and Institute Union. She made herself so useful in this capacity that she was soon afterwards appointed secretary to the Union itself. Nearly all the workmen's clubs in London are affiliated to this Institute, and the ordinary course of its business brought Miss Smith into constant and friendly intercourse both with the leading working-men and with persons of every class interested in social and industrial problems. After some years of this work she married one of the ablest and most disinterested of the men associated with the Club Union, Mr. Thomas Paterson, formerly a cabinet-maker, a speculative metaphysician of considerable originality, and a man of singular uprightness and generosity of character.

Immediately after her marriage Mrs. Paterson began to organise the movement which must be permanently connected with her name, in favour of trade unionism among women. She saw that in women's trades, at their best, there was the same need for mutual help and protection as in the trades of men, while every form of charitable help had been tried and found ineffective to deal with the chronic starvation prevailing in women's trades at their worst. She knew that working-women, as a class, are too poor, too busy, and too timid to start any even mildly militant organisation for themselves; and at the same time she believed that there were men and women of leisure, dissatisfied with the machinery of so-called charity, who would be ready and willing to help and encourage the workers to combine to help themselves.

A society upon these lines was formed in the summer of 1874, with the good wishes of all well-known friends of the working classes as such, together with the friends of women as such. Some conservative ladies, who still had their doubts about trade



unionism in general, trusted to the discretion of their sex to revise its platform so as to eliminate all doubtful elements, and working-men, who objected in theory to all female labour, admitted that it was really the competition of disorganised female labour that they objected to, not the employment of women who had learnt to ask a fair day's wages for a fair day's work. Public opinion was thus, within a certain area, prepared to look with favour upon a *bonâ fide* trade society of working-women, if the women of any trade should be pleased to form one; and the women employed in book-folding and book-sewing were happily ready to rise to the occasion. With the co-operation of the men in the trade a public meeting was called, at which about three hundred women were present, and the first women's trade union was forthwith established. About three hundred members were enrolled in the first year, and rules were adopted which have been the model for most of the women's unions subsequently formed. A shilling entrance fee, and a weekly subscription of twopence, entitle members to receive, after a year's probation, 5s. a week as sick or out-of-work pay for not more than eight weeks in a year. No exact actuarial calculations can be made as to the payments necessary to cover trade benefits, but the experience of the women bookbinders shows that the scale of pay and benefits first suggested by Mrs. Paterson is such as can fairly be maintained. The Society since its formation has paid over 200*l.* as sick and over 100*l.* as out-of-work allowance, and has a balance in the bank of over 300*l.* to meet any strain upon the funds. The average earnings of the women in this trade, *when fully employed*, are about 10*s.* to 12*s.* a week; but we must not conclude from this that their average yearly income amounts to 26*l.* or 31*l.* There are many weeks in the year when the publishing trade is slack, and the women, though not literally 'out of work,' and so entitled to the Society allowance, are only working half-time or less, and perhaps not earning even so much as 5*s.* In fact, if we are to form any conception of the marvellous exercise of thrift and self-denial habitual amongst working-women, we must in all cases make a deduction of about 25 per cent. from the so-called 'average earnings.'<sup>1</sup>

The Upholsteresses' Society, which was formed next, has fewer members, but, owing to the depression of trade, especially in the last two years, it has paid nearly as much in benefits, and more

<sup>1</sup> In a factory, employing 2,000 women, it was said quite sincerely, in answer to a question about the rate of wages: 'Oh, they earn 10*s.* or 11*s.*;' but the average weekly wage bill, when divided by 2,000, gave only a real weekly average of 8*s.* 6*d.* a head, and the experience of large men's unions frequently gives a similar result.

than twice as much in out-of-work allowance, as in sick-pay. Hence its funds are at a low ebb. In this trade the 'average wages' would be probably described as reaching 15s. a week; but the uncertainty of employment, as already seen, is greater, and the trade as a whole is suffering from the action of a few shops (much esteemed, alas! by the middle-class lovers of cheapness), which extend their trade first by cutting wages and prices down to the lowest possible point, and then again by reinvesting the profits so acquired in the shares of companies, hotel or other, which have orders for showy furniture to bestow. Respectable and liberal employers who do not engage in this class of speculation are being increasingly driven out of the trade by the competition of such firms.

Shirtmakers, tailoresses, and dressmakers in London have formed similar societies, the largest branch of the Tailoresses' Union consisting of women employed in the Government Army Clothing Factory, where energetic officials are always ready to justify their own receipt of a handsome salary by pointing to economies effected in the wages of their subordinates. In 1875 the first women's unions were represented at the Glasgow Trades Congress by Mrs. Paterson and the present writer, not a single objection being raised by the other delegates to the representation of *bonâ fide* trade societies of women. Indeed, then, and on all future occasions, leading members of the Congress were ready and glad to assist in organising new local societies, and in recommending the principles of unionism to women. Any doubts or suspicion that might otherwise have been felt were tranquillised by the confidence felt by the many working-men to whom she was known in Mrs. Paterson's judgment and clear-headed devotion to the interests of labour.

Her work in connection with the Unionist Propaganda falls naturally into three divisions. The London trade societies were, of course, in constant communication with her, each secretary of a union being *ex officio* a member of the committee of the central parent society, called the Women's Protective and Provident League.<sup>1</sup> A library, a swimming-club, a monthly journal, winter evening entertainments, lectures, and conferences on subjects of interest, such as factory inspection, co-operation, &c., were provided or organised by the League for the benefit of the societies, and the cost of public meetings, printing, and other

<sup>1</sup> Further information respecting this Society can be obtained from the Secretary, Miss Black, at its office, Industrial Hall, Clark's Buildings, Broadstreet, Bloomsbury, W.C.

preliminary expenses connected with the formation of new societies were met in the same way; but the unions, once formed, have been from the first entirely self-governed and self-supporting. In the provinces, on the other hand, the League has sometimes started, and sometimes only been called upon to encourage, independent local efforts. In the former case, except in Oxford, little permanent success can be recorded, apparently for want of just such help and encouragement to the young and struggling societies as has been given continuously to those in London by the League. On the other hand, in two cases at least, important trade movements have been successfully conducted by women, who were pleased to be invited to give an account of their exploits at the Annual Meeting in London.

The first case was that of the Seamers and Stitchers' Union in Leicester. The women employed in finishing hosiery had always been paid at a very low rate, and organisation was particularly difficult, as the workers were scattered in about forty villages round. In 1874 some of the more courageous applied to the manufacturers for an advance, and many expressed their willingness to grant it if a 'list price' was prepared and accepted by the workers. This was done by the townspeople, and thereupon the employers who refused the advance sent their orders to the villages. Then the women went out into the villages, tramping through deep snow, canvassing and collecting from house to house, till twenty-seven out of thirty-seven villages had joined the union, and it had 300*l.* available for 'strike pay.' All this was described by one of the actors in broad, picturesque dialect, with the most graphic details, concluding with the statement that 'the advance gained by the list was for some of the women as much as 2*s.* per week on earnings of from 5*s.* to 7*s.* per week.'

The story of the Dewsbury Woollen Weavers' Union told in 1880 was substantially similar. About 700 members were enrolled, and in 1879 the Society spent 'in resisting reductions' 66*l.* 7*s.* 6*d.*, while its income was 155*l.* 8*s.* 11*d.* This Union was formed in consequence of an association of the masters, formed to equalise the prices paid for the same class of work throughout the district. The masters naturally proposed to level down, while the work-people reasonably advocated the opposite course; with the result of securing an advance of 2*s.* 4*d.* for eight days' work in one case, and in general raising the rate of wages in bad firms instead of lowering it in good ones. With larger funds and a larger number of active members the League would be able to render great

service to country unions by keeping them in communication with each other, and promoting the establishment of permanent benefit branches, which prevent members from falling off after the satisfactory arrangement of trade disputes.

Of course, taking the country as a whole, women's unionism is still in much too rudimentary a state to exercise any general influence upon the rate of wages or the hours of work. The few who do belong to a society obtain certain definite advantages, which are worth having in themselves; and they are also firmly convinced that they are treated with more respect and consideration in their workshops when it is known that they are no longer collectively penniless or unbefriended. The societies in London are fully recognised by the employers, who send to the office when in want of workers, and besides the unbounded gratitude and affection felt for Mrs. Paterson herself by the members of the Women's Unions, they also certainly count among the advantages they have gained by association, the discovery that there are persons in other ranks of life capable of valuing their friendship, able to understand their wants, and honestly anxious to enable them to improve their position to an extent which they would hardly venture to hope for if quite all the world were to be against them always.

What has been learnt in the last dozen years by the outside friends of the unionists would take longer to describe, and not all the knowledge so acquired is of a pleasurable nature. We see that besides the thriftless, helpless, more or less incompetent or undeserving poor, who are the chronic objects of fitful and ineffective charity, besides the ignorant and sickly residuum whose work is at best worth little more than the mere nothing which it fetches—besides all these, whose number is more than enough to baffle us by itself, we find that there are perhaps a million of respectable, self-supporting, self-respecting, fairly skilled female operatives, often the sole maintenance of a family, whose clear average weekly earnings, with a long day's labour, are more often under than over ten shillings a week. We believe that there are still well-to-do people who say and think that ten shillings a week are very good wages for a single woman; but that opinion is seldom supported by a detailed budget. Let us see for ourselves how much spending there is in such a sum. The rations allowed to the old people in Whitechapel Workhouse cost, according to Mrs. Barnett, 3s. 11d. a head per week. In quantity they are scarcely equal to the amount physiologists consider necessary for

the healthy maintenance of an able-bodied adult, and a lone woman can hardly buy as cheaply as contractors. Still, we will suppose our working-woman to be content with the same diet as the aged paupers, and to spend only 4s. a week in food; 3s. is an ordinary rent to pay in London for such a small back room as she will occupy; lights, firing, and washing can hardly cost her less than another shilling, and if she belongs, as we will hope, to a trade union, her necessary weekly expenses are brought up to 8s. 2d. without any provision for clothes, holidays, amusements, or saving; for all these and other purposes she has a balance available varying, let us say, from 4d. to 1s. 10d. a week, or from 17s. 4d. to 4l. 15s. 9d. a year!

And yet there are ladies, whose cheapest dress costs as much as the whole year's pocket-money of an industrious bookfolder, who have the audacity to talk about thrift to these passed mistresses in the art of 'going without'!

Such hard habitual penury is not, we submit, good even for a single woman, and probably few people who take the trouble to realise for themselves the sort of existence implied by the nominal wages of 10s. a week will fail to join in the wish that women's trade unions might become strong enough to establish as their *minimum* rate something like half-a-crown a day, or 15s. a week, instead of 10s. or less, for workers of ordinary ability. But if, in one way, it is painful to discover how hard a life is led even by the more skilled and fortunate of our women workers, the unions provide us with new grounds of hope for the future.

Whatever differences there may be between men and women as such, it is an old observation that common experiences give to men and women of the same class some common characteristics overriding the usual differences of sex. The male slave becomes servile and the woman aristocrat imperious, while similarity of position and education will efface the distinctions of class as well as sex, so that in the mediæval hierarchy the sons of noble and peasant have more in common with each other and with St. Catherine or St. Theresa than with their lay contemporaries. Again, we find that all education, if good of its kind, develops the same sort of valuable qualities: the workshop is a good substitute for the school, and the mechanic who is accustomed to administer the affairs of his trade society is receiving the best training for practical politics. We owe to Mrs. Paterson the discovery that the education of the workshop is just as effective in producing a class of intelligent working-women as in developing the intelligent

working-man of whom we have heard so often and so long. Girls who only work at a trade for a few years of course do not receive the full benefits of this sort of technical education; but in every trade there are large numbers of women who from one cause or another have worked almost or quite continuously. Single women; wives with sick, or idle, or unlucky husbands; widows with children, and girls of unusual character or education—all these classes take their trade seriously, welcome the idea of trade combination, and are proved by experience to possess all the qualities necessary for organising and administering a trade society. These women are certainly, as a class, more intelligent, enterprising, and resourceful than the average workman's wife or the 'poor women' known to district visitors. They have, as a rule, the same domestic experience as other women, with that of the workshop in addition. They cannot help knowing a great deal at first hand about the conditions of work in their own trade, and their own experience serves to interpret the secondhand knowledge of other trades which they pick up, equally without effort. These women know the needs and the failings of their own class infinitely better than their well-to-do would-be benefactors; and until they are taken into council there is little hope of doing anything permanent for the lower class of workers. But the more reason we find to esteem and value the most intelligent of the women operatives, the more grievous it is to realise that even these women are living permanently on the borderland of poverty and want.

We have mentioned the achievements of the Leicester Seamers and Stitchers' Union. Mrs. Mason, one of the members of the original committee, who engaged in the missionary tramp through the snow, was a fair representative of the best type of unionist. Eloquent, humorous, and thoroughly capable, she and her husband, who worked at the same trade, would have been counted among the *élite* of the working-class. Their joint earnings maintained a comfortable home; they were zealous gardeners, thanks to the plots available round the town of Leicester; active co-operators, and ready at any time to sacrifice a few days' wages to promote the cause of unionism in other parts. It gives a painful reality to the statistics which tell of the different duration of life in different social classes when we read the obituary notices in trade organs and see how young the elder unionists are when they die. Mr. Mason died, suddenly, of heart disease; his wife ten months later, at the age of forty-nine, leaving three children, the youngest eleven, and so, it was said, all able to help them-



selves ; but we can understand that when the struggle for existence begins so early it must end early too.

The first secretary of the Upholsteresses' Society, Miss Wilkinson, was also lost prematurely to the cause of Unionism by her early death last autumn ; and no one who had heard her describe, evidently from personal experience, the hardships of the search for work, with failing shoe-leather, before the existence of the Society, with its free registry and out-of-work pay, could doubt that it is by the ordinary everyday hardships and vicissitudes of industrial existence that such lives are cut short. Miss Wilkinson herself was not latterly engaged in the trade, but employed as a lecturer by the Women's Suffrage Society, the Birkbeck Institute having furnished her with the means of self-education. She was one of the first to welcome Mrs. Paterson's suggestions as to the need for trade organisation, and never ceased to take an active part in the propaganda of the Women's League.

Thus we find, on the one hand, with satisfaction, among the workers themselves women of character, intelligence, and education, able and willing to devote themselves to the interests of their own class ; and on the other hand, we find, with a sort of horror, that these most valuable members of society have on the whole, let us say, an average 'expectation of life' less by twenty years than the women who spend their time in comfortable idleness, or industry tempered with the ease and comforts of middle-class life. Death had not yet done its work, and in December 1886 Mrs. Paterson also died, at the early age of thirty-nine, from a constitutional malady, aggravated, there can be little doubt, by overwork and the anxiety which she underwent after her husband's death when endeavouring to continue all the honorary work she had undertaken for the benefit of others, while at the same time compelled to seek remunerative employment for her own support.

There are many well-known 'movements' under benevolent patronage, taking up a much larger space in the mind of the general public than the one founded by Mrs. Paterson, which have failed to elicit anything like the same amount of gratitude and recognition on the part of the class intended to be benefited. Many of our readers, no doubt, may here meet with her name for the first time ; but working-men throughout the country, and working-women in London and those parts where she was personally known, would name her rather than any of our middle-class philanthropists, if asked what woman had laboured most, and most wisely, to improve the industrial position of women.

In the last report of the society to which she was honorary secretary, prepared only a fortnight before her death, Mrs. Pater-son quoted from Mr. Besant's story the saying, 'the impossible way [of helping working-women] is that the ladies of the country shall unite to form a protection league for their working sisters,' and appealed to educated women of leisure to prove the reproach unfounded by taking part in the attempt already begun to enrol both classes in such a league for the protection of the weak. Will any help come from this quarter, or is the novelist's indictment true? 'Ladies deliberately shut their eyes; they won't take trouble; they won't think; they like things about them to look smooth and comfortable; they will get things cheap if they can. *What do they care if the cheapness is got by starving women?* What is killing this girl here? Bad food and hard work. Cheapness! What do the ladies care how many working girls are killed?'

'What the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve for,' and, honestly, I am afraid that ladies *don't* care how many working-girls are killed so long as they know nothing about it. They will even go so far as to say, What is the use of knowing or caring if it can't be helped? To which the answer is, *It can* be helped if only enough people will begin to know and care. Unionism by itself will do a good deal for women, as it has for men; but there are special difficulties in the way of their organisation, and the first thing their friends can do for them is to help to remove these difficulties. Trade-unionism, however, is not, any more than co-operation, a panacea for all the evils and dangers of our industrial system: it deals only with two out of the three great factors of the problem; as if the capitalist and the labourer could decide their quarrels without the intervention of that virtual employer of both—the consumer. The only real and effective protection that can be extended to the starving workgirl must come from a universal conspiracy of consumers not to buy the produce of stolen or half-paid-for labour, spending, of course, the money so economised in employing at first hand a corresponding number of women at trade-society wages. No doubt if we all were to buy only what we could afford to pay for honestly, some of us would get, as the lovers of cheapness say, less for our money; but a clear conscience would be thrown in as compensation, and the industrial interests of the community would not suffer, since <sup>as</sup> large a proportion of the national income would still be spent on the products of agriculture and manufactures, though a

larger proportion would be spent and consumed by the producers themselves.

To bring about this conspiracy or alliance between women of all classes, two things are needed first—namely, to give courage to the women who work, and knowledge to the women who buy; or rather, since they can so easily give each other encouragement and information, the one thing needed first is to bring the two classes into contact with each other. We have shown how this has been done upon a small scale through the initiative of Mrs. Paterson, whose life and labours it is proposed to commemorate by the foundation of a Central Trades Hall and Working Women's Club, to be used and administered by the women unionists of London, present and to come. The society founded by Mrs. Paterson will, no doubt, have its headquarters in the same premises, and working-men unionists of wide experience agree with the women in believing that the mere possession of such a central house of call will give a great impetus to the cause of unionism. At present whenever a public meeting has to be held preliminary to the organisation of a new trade, premises, often expensive or inconvenient, have to be hired, and many who would come to a place they know and feel at home in are deterred by having to hunt up some unknown address in a strange quarter. As Miss Wilkinson used to say, the working-woman has always two days' work to do in the twenty-four hours—half-a-day's housekeeping, namely, before and after the day in factory or workshop. Her time available for public interests is therefore shorter than a man's, and the public house, still used perforce, even though reluctantly, as an office by the men's unions is fortunately not considered available for women. The established unions can, and do, pay a reasonable sum as office rent for the use of premises provided by the League; but larger and better premises would attract and accommodate more members and more societies, all of which would become self-supporting as soon as formed.

Of course the world cannot be reformed by subscriptions to any society or any institution, however useful or well-intentioned; but there is a clear generic difference between unproductive charity—money given, that is, to meet some particular want, which is spent and done with, leaving just the same want to present itself again next day—and money invested in furthering a movement which gathers impetus as it proceeds, and looks forward to uprooting the very seeds and germs of social distress. On this ground alone, all those whose consciences are troubled by their

share of responsibility for the sufferings of those who hew wood and draw water in our service should be glad to enrol themselves in the Holy Alliance or protective league preached by Mr. Besant, and founded in embryo by Mrs. Paterson.

But this is not all. The responsibility for the existing evils of our social order is distributed over all classes of society. Neither the labourer, nor the capitalist, nor the much-abused middleman, can bear the whole burden. From the ducal agent running up rents to the frugal housewife running down prices, we all contribute something to the influences which starve Melenda, body and soul. For the most part we act in ignorance; we do not mean to be cruel; we wish to buy that suit for little Harry cheap; we don't *wish* the tailoress who makes it to starve; and we don't know that 3*d.* has to come off her price, and a shilling or two off her 8*s.* 6*d.* of weekly wages in order that we may be tempted by 9*s.* 11*d.* instead of 10*s.* 6*d.* upon the ticketed price of an enterprising tradesman. Hitherto, all our attempts at reform have started on the hypothesis that the rich know what is wrong and can teach the lower orders, who do it, how to amend their ways. And yet society is very much where it was when philanthropists began to tinker at it. Judging from results, they have somehow failed to go the right way to work; they must have either preached the wrong remedy, or preached the right remedy to the wrong people. They have preached thrift to the poor: is it possible that they ought to have preached it to the rich instead? They have preached industry to the workers: would it perhaps be better were they to practise it themselves?

These and other such-like revolutionary doubts suggest themselves when we begin to compare what the women unionists have to teach with what they, like the rest of us, have still to learn; and we have no hesitation in maintaining that the projected Paterson Hall will be just as useful as an institution for the economic instruction of our ladies of leisure as it will be as headquarters for trade-unionist propaganda. Even now, consumers may learn from members of the existing unions which of two firms, with perhaps equal prices, equal civility, and an equal display of plate glass, has the repute of a 'fair shop' among the workers, and which is shunned as a 'stoneyard' or refuge for the destitute in funds or character. Let us suppose the existing organisation strengthened and extended, and there is surely nothing impossible in the idea that the valued customers of a fashionable shop should allow themselves to remonstrate with its courteous proprietor when

they hear of fines or reductions, insanitary workrooms, or other subterranean grievances of the operatives. Let it become the fashion for ladies to ask, not merely what is done for the resident shop-assistants, but how the workroom and the out-of-door 'hands' are treated. It will then become the fashion among respectable firms to patronise the unions and boast of paying 'list prices' only; it will become the fashion among the workers to join their trade society; and a coalition of workers, customers, and employers with a character to lose would easily suppress any tendency among needy or unscrupulous masters to rebel against the necessity of paying decent subsistence wages even to the women they employ. Of course there will be grumbling: shopkeepers will lay the blame of every fancy price upon the workers' claims, and the ruin of England will be prophesied as confidently as when its prosperity was held to turn upon setting babies of five to work in factories, or harnessing naked women to draw wagons in coal-mines. There is no cheaper beast of burden than a woman, but somehow the national income has proved equal to the strain of providing more costly quadrupeds for the latter work. And, supposing the same income to be further drawn upon to the extent of providing food, clothes, and a little leisure for our whole working population, there will still stand between us and bankruptcy, not merely the produce of conscientious 'thrift' amongst the wealthy and comfortable classes, but also all the expenditure now thrown upon the community by chronic poverty, disease, and the demoralisation that results from hopeless misery.

It is a commonplace of the old political economy that it is cheaper to pay a labourer wages that he can live upon, and let him keep himself, than to buy his labour cheaper and eke out his wages by state or charitable doles. The organisation of women's industry will help the community to understand that every sound economic principle applies to women as well as to men, and it is therefore hardly Utopian to believe that a good day may come, and even quickly, when we shall all see that the labour of starving workgirls is not really even 'cheap' while the conditions under which it is bought and sold are quite intolerably 'nasty,' and such as must be relentlessly proscribed by any duly enlightened public opinion.

EDITH SIMCOX.

## *The Use of the Cycle for Military Purposes.*

**A**N investigation into the possible use of the cycle for military purposes must of necessity, as yet, be instituted almost altogether from a theoretical standpoint; and yet I venture to think that it will possess a certain interest, having in view the fact that the experiments conducted in connection with the operations between Canterbury and Dover, at Easter, have attracted so much attention amongst experienced military men.

It is quite in accordance with established precedent that a novelty—such as the introduction of bicycles into the army—should be decried by those who object to any innovations on principle; but, unless the cycle has sufficient intrinsic merit to overcome such sentimental opposition, its ultimate adoption is more than doubtful; whilst, if it does possess such merit, its advocates should rather welcome an intelligent criticism which would spur them on, and thus lead to the conversion of the sceptics. It is, at the same time, much to be desired that the more enthusiastic believers in the new movement should somewhat modify their enthusiasm, and allow the authorities to gradually discover for themselves, by actual experience, the wide application of the cycle to many useful purposes. Some of these over-ardent advocates are setting up an unattainable standard of efficiency and serviceableness which will inevitably lead to disappointment and discredit when the attempt is made in practical work to reach it.

Those cyclists who look for benefit to the sport from this movement would rather let the development be a gradual one than see the cycle-soldier spring into existence apparently full-grown, but in reality in a crude and immature condition, and liable, for that reason, to make constant mistakes.

The functions to be exercised by the cycle-soldier cannot, as



yet, be fully defined; but it should at the outset be made clear that he must not in any way assume the functions of cavalry. I am informed that history is eloquent concerning the failure of mounted infantry to retain their infantry character. Possibly the cycle-soldier of the future may afford a solution of this difficulty, and prove the feasibility of permanently mounted infantry.

Mounted infantry suffer in any case under many disadvantages as an effective force; one-third of the number must be left to take care of the horses, and the remaining two-thirds are hampered by the necessity of keeping within a certain distance of their animals; whilst the horses themselves form a conspicuous mark for the enemies' artillery. Compare mounted infantry under these conditions with a similar number of men mounted upon cycles. More inconspicuous and more silent, the cycle-soldiers could advance with equal rapidity and ease, and the machines, stacked in pairs or thrown down in the grass, or under trees or hedges, would be quite invisible at a very short distance, and even if seen, much less easily damaged than a similar number of horses. The whole of the men would then be available for the ordinary work of infantry, thus adding one-third to the effective strength of the detachment. Such bodies of cycle-soldiers, drawn from amongst the marksmen of our army, would, as Lieut.-Colonel Savile recently suggested, possess an especial value in the field.

As scouts the cycle-soldiers would again have many points in their favour. When compared with infantry, they would be decidedly superior in speed; whilst, should occasion arise, the cyclist could drop his machine in its tracks and act entirely as an infantry-man. When keeping touch over a wide stretch of country the extra pace attainable by the light-riding scout would be of immense advantage.

As compared with the cavalry scout, the cycle-mounted soldier would possess many important recommendations; he would be much less conspicuous than the cavalry man, not inferior to him in speed, much more independent of his mount should it be at any time necessary for him to operate on foot; whilst his progress would be much more silent, especially at high speeds.

Behind the fighting-line the cyclist would be found very useful. Message-carrying, as was remarked at a recent discussion on these points, is poor work for a cavalry soldier; valuable horses are wearied, and useful soldiers sent away on duties which could be at least as effectively rendered by any average cyclist; and a properly trained and organised body of cycling messengers would, I feel

sure, show a much higher average of speed, under almost any conditions, than that attained by mounted men, whose horses need food and rest, and suffer considerably in bad weather.

Escort duty is another service which the cycle-soldiers would be especially competent to undertake, for they could accommodate their pace to that of the baggage waggons without being tempted to mount upon them, as an infantry escort sometimes is; whilst their speed and independence would enable them to carry out the necessary scouting duties in a most effective manner. By their employment, the cavalry would be released for other duties, whilst the pace of the convoy would not necessarily be restricted to that of marching infantry.

These suggestions as to the possible services which cycle-soldiers might render are necessarily crude, but they are based upon an intimate knowledge of the capabilities of the cycle under all conditions.

In estimating the value of the cycle-soldier, his pace and his staying powers are, of course, the most important considerations, and I here tabulate some results obtained by cavalry and by cyclists, for the purpose of comparison.

It is only fair to point out that the cavalry were carrying a considerable amount of baggage; but the figures are so very disproportionate, that, after making every possible allowance to the horsemen, the cyclists still show much better results on all points. The three following cavalry 'records' were quoted by Major Craigie at a discussion which took place at the Royal Artillery Institution at Woolwich. Some Russian cavalry rode 105 miles in 38 hours. Riding time, 20 hours. Average,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles per hour. Another body of Russian cavalry rode 149 miles in  $40\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Riding time,  $27\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Average,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  miles. Four men of the 13th Hussars, with four led horses, rode  $137\frac{1}{2}$  miles in  $68\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Riding-time, 20 hrs. 39 min. Average,  $6\frac{3}{4}$  miles per hour.

The following are a few of the most notable road records made by cyclists:—

G. P. Mills rode 295 miles in 24 consecutive hours. Riding time, 22 hours, upon a safety bicycle. Average, a trifle over 13 miles per hour. J. H. Adams rode 266 miles, inside 24 hours, on an ordinary bicycle. Average, over 11 miles per hour. J. W. M. Brown rode 255 miles in 24 hours. Riding time, 21 hrs. 30 min. Average, over  $11\frac{3}{4}$  miles per hour, on an ordinary bicycle. A. H. Fletcher rode 250 miles in 24 hours, on a triecyle. T. R. Marriott and A. Bird rode 232 miles in 21 hrs. 30 min., on a

tandem, over wet and heavy roads, with six hours of continuous rain during the journey.

In 1886, according to a tabular return recently published in *The Cyclist*, no less than 37 riders covered 200 miles and over in 24 consecutive hours. Of these performances, thirty-two were accomplished on ordinary and safety bicycles, three on single tricycles, and one ride by two cyclists on a tandem. Since September 1876, 128 cyclists have accomplished this feat.

It will be seen at once that picked cyclists could attain a very high average of speed. The cycle needs neither food or water, does not tire, is noiseless and inconspicuous. The 137½ miles covered by the 13th Hussars in 68½ hours would be very easily accomplished by a quartet of picked cyclists in fourteen hours; whilst, if secrecy was required, the journey could be accomplished with great ease in two nights; the silent wheels would pass undetected where four mounted men could scarcely hope to go unnoticed. The road record for 100 miles is just inside 6 hrs. 40 min.

The important question which now presents itself is this: What type of machine will be found most suitable for the use of the cycle-soldier? There are four general types before the public.

- (1) The ordinary bicycle.
- (2) The rear-driving safety bicycle.
- (3) The single tricycle.
- (4) Composite or multi-cycles, carrying two or more passengers.

The ordinary bicycle will not find any great amount of favour in this connection. Skill in its management would be easily attained, and the mere question of mounting and riding with the fullest kit, rifle, and so on, could be soon settled by practice. I have, when living in the country, often mounted a 60-inch machine carrying a heavy game-bag, long shoulder duck-gun, cartridge-belt, &c. But the height of the machine would simply make the rider conspicuous, and this type of bicycle possesses no material points of advantage over (2) the safety bicycle of the rear-driving type. This machine has two equal-sized wheels, the rear one being driven by a single chain. The rider is placed above and between the two wheels, and his feet, when the pedals are at their lowest point, come within a few inches of the ground. The rider is thus scarcely more conspicuous than an infantry-man. The road speed of these machines is as great as that of the full-sized bicycle, the above-quoted record of 295 miles in 24 hours having been made upon a cycle of this pattern; whilst for ease

of mounting, dismounting, stowage, and handling, this type is far in advance of all others. Owing to the position of the rider, almost equidistant from the points of ground-contact, the machine runs very easily over considerable obstacles, and it can be ridden over very rough country should the necessity arise, and is practically safe down any hill. This type also offers special facilities for the stowage of baggage, and especially for the convenient slinging of a rifle. The single tricycle (3) cannot compete with the safety bicycle in general adaptability, and under unfavourable conditions would be almost unmanageable; and the same remark applies to class 4, the machines included in which may have a special limited use under certain conditions, but which will never be widely adopted. Thus the machine carrying ten riders which was recently tested at Aldershot behaved very well, but would not compare in efficiency or handiness with ten men mounted upon ten independent machines. As for such impracticable absurdities as artillery-carrying tricycles, they need scarcely be mentioned. The rear-driving safety will indubitably be found to be the best machine for the class of work contemplated. The facilities for the stowage of baggage, as pointed out above, are considerable, and this is a point upon which many opinions adverse to the adoption of the cycle have been based, the critics having asserted the inability of the wheelman to carry any considerable amount of luggage. This is altogether a fallacy; a fully equipped soldier could with ease mount and ride a safety bicycle, and his rate of progression would be very much faster than his best pace on foot. But no practical rider thinks of carrying upon his own person any weight which he can transfer to his machine, and I am designedly putting the proportion very low when I say that a man could more easily carry fifty per cent. additional deadweight upon his machine than he would carry upon his person when marching on foot. Thus, supposing for the sake of argument that an infantry soldier's kit, with rifle, weighs 50 lbs., I am quite certain that he would find carrying 75 lbs. properly stowed upon a bicycle a decidedly easier task; and his average pace would very considerably exceed twice his marching pace under similar conditions.

I would remind those cyclists who may be inclined to question my figures that the soldier marching on foot is accustomed to carry a heavy kit. The ordinary touring cyclist would not, of course, think of carrying such a weight as 75 lbs., and were his machine so laden he would doubtless find it hard to ride; but exactly the same parallel may be drawn between the average

pedestrian tourist and the infantry soldier on the march. Were the cycle-soldiers drilled and exercised upon their machines, duly laden with their baggage, just as infantry are daily drilled with their knapsacks, greatcoats, &c., they would soon carry the weight I have named with greater ease than the ordinary soldier carries his kit; whilst when on special service in which extra speed was required, they could be relieved of some of their heavier baggage, and would show a higher average of pace in consequence.

Having a long experience of practical work to guide me, I am of opinion that the average pace which would be attained by a properly-trained body of cycle-soldiers would be very high as compared with present military speed rates, and mobility is, I believe, a much desired quality in modern armies.

Another objection which has been raised is that the cycle is only a fair-weather machine, and that bad weather and heavy roads would prove fatal to its efficiency. It is, of course, true that such conditions would impair, to a marked degree, the speed of the cyclists; but would the cycle be the only vehicle hampered and delayed by such conditions? Are not railway-trains, cavalry, infantry, artillery, and baggage waggons all proportionately affected? Possibly the cycle might be more markedly impeded, but that simply admits its higher average of pace under normal conditions.

An ordinary amateur, owning a machine which suits him, and on which he has spent a good deal of money, is not likely to willingly submit it to severe or unnecessary tests. The cycle-soldier would not be guided by any such sentiment, and would not, in fact, have to take nearly so much care of his steed as the cavalry-man, and under such conditions the cycle would go almost anywhere.

Finally, I come to the question of cost, and on this point I think I can at least claim to show a material economy, even if the use of the cycle is confined wholly to message-carrying.

A rear-driving safety bicycle made to the appended specification could be turned out commercially for from 12*l.* to 14*l.*, a figure which will, I imagine, compare well with the average price of cavalry remounts. The machine once purchased needs no forage and no special protection, whilst, if properly constructed, it should but seldom need the attention of the blacksmith; and the daily care necessary to keep it in serviceable order would be very small as compared with the attention a cavalry-man has to give his horse. Made to gauge, and rigidly interchangeable, two

disabled machines could be easily turned into one serviceable one, whilst the vital parts are few, small, and easily carried, so that more elaborate repairs could only be a question of time.

It is needless for me to point out the economy which the adoption of the wheel would effect, provided that the work done compared even approximately with that accomplished by cavalry scouts, messengers, and so on, and I feel confident that this will be fully proven if experiments are properly carried through under expert supervision.

It may be useful for me to add a specification for a suitable machine for military work.

*Specification for a rear-driving safety bicycle suitable for military purposes.*

Two 30-inch wheels with stout, direct spokes, which are easily replaced; solid crescent section rims (these being calculated to stand rough usage without being rendered utterly useless, better than hollow rims); stout tyres fixed by Bown's process, so as to be practically irremovable; hubs with ball bearings, and a sound spring-topped lubricator in each wheel; driving-wheel geared to 54 inches; frame of stout tube, as simple as possible; handle-bar and saddle standard adjustable; break connection carried either through or behind the steering pillar, so as to allow of luggage being carried in front; rubber-clothed foot-rests; mud-guard well off wheel; plenty of clearance at top of forks; head socket on steering pillar, should be of the Stanley type, as this would be less likely to be disabled if struck by a bullet than an open head. The backbone head should have a deepish and thickish flange to withstand the extra strain of baggage-carrying. The cranks should be slotted to allow 6-inch to 7-inch throw, and the chain should be of the open link type, like the best Abingdon chain, as this type holds the dirt less than the close-built chains, and is at the same time very free and steady in its running, and with but little attention would run silently and wear well; the step should be of good size; the handle-bars strong, and the handles of largish diameter, so as not to give the rider cramp; the saddle, of the long-distance type, should be of good size, and a large tool-bag should be hung behind it. The whole machine to be painted a grey or neutral colour, and finished dull all over, so as not to glint in the sunlight. Some of the kit—a package rather larger than an ordinary knapsack—could be put in front of the



steering pillar, on a suitable carrier; the greatcoat could lie along the top, or be strapped upon the handle-bar; the rifle could be very conveniently carried in clips along the horizontal frame, whilst further accommodation for baggage would be found under the horizontal frame, and on either side of the hind wheel.

With these suggestions I leave the subject, in the hope that the use of the cycle may be as fully tested in the English army as it has been in the armies of Italy, Germany and France; the former country having placed an order, only a short time back, for some hundreds of machines in this country. Should anyone who can assist the movement wish for further information, I shall be only too glad to give it.

G. LACY HILLIER.

## *Bridget.*

### CHAPTER I.

**I**T was a little drab, shabby lodging-house—one of a double row of little drab houses, with weather-stained faces, and limp parlour curtains, and crochet antimacassars over the round tables in the parlour windows. We had one little sitting-room downstairs near the street, and two little bedrooms upstairs near the roof. From our sitting-room, as we sat and corrected exercises and mended our gloves and made our gowns, we could look across the way at the children from less genteel streets who came to keep shops on the quiet doorsteps, could watch the shadows from the opposite houses creep nearer us as the day grew, and could follow the interrupted course of the milkman and the crumpet-man as they came by at their stated times and made the air musical with jingling cans and bell. Upstairs we had a wider view, of red house-tops begrimed with smoke, a city of chimney-stacks, and an easterly sky where the sun arose. Looking back, there is nothing else that I remember as well as that land of sky—with the sun shining red through the winter mist, or tender with the clear soft light of spring or autumn mornings, or with the stars shining down at night from the far-away greyness, and the moon slowly parting the clouds, looking down calmly on a gas-lit, garish world. I can still conjure up clear pictures of that land of sky. And with the pictures, to give them reality, there always comes another recollection—Bridget's voice as, morning after morning, night after night, it came through the thin partition from the room next mine—Bridget's voice, repeating, in clear, unenthusiastic, even tones, Euclid's propositions and Latin verbs as she arose or went to bed.

Bridget's voice was like Bridget. It was an undistracted voice. If Bridget ever looked from her window as she moved to and fro, the sunrise over the roofs, the quiet night sky did not

claim her attention ; there were no absent-minded pauses between her tenses and her propositions. There was no under-note of impatience or weariness or dreaminess in her tone. She spoke clearly, crisply, without distraction—but without eagerness.

Whenever I think of Bridget, it is first her voice that comes back to me. It was a characteristic voice—and yet less characteristic, perhaps, of Bridget as she *was*, than of Bridget as she *seemed* to be and *wished* to be.

My memory holds a clear picture of Bridget still. In my memory she always wears a stuff gown of chocolate-brown, with a straight body guiltless of trimming, and a scanty skirt cut shorter than fashion deems seemly. Her gown makes her slimness look like thinness ; it gives her an air of purpose and decision ; it somehow affects landladies with a sense of her keenness in money matters, and her deadness in matters of frivolity and sentiment. She is a pretty girl—but not very pretty. Her little clear-cut oval face wants colour and softness. Her grey eyes have too smileless a glance ; her lips rarely laugh ; her brown hair is so neatly braided that neatness seems a fault. She sits and reads or sews or writes. Now and then, at rare intervals, she looks up and speaks to me—she looks straight at me, gravely and calmly—sometimes there is a touch of dry humour in her words or tone, but her face remains as grave and unamused as ever. That is Bridget as I see her still.

It was never very easy to explain, either to others or to ourselves, why Bridget and I had chosen to lodge together. There had been no sufficient motive of friendship, or similarity of thought, or need of companionship ; we lodged together for a year and never drifted beyond kindly acquaintanceship into closer intimacy. But, as acquaintances, we got on well together, and our plan of joint housekeeping proved a desirable plan enough. My mind was unpractical—Bridget was reserved ; but we bore one another's faults very tranquilly, and displayed no evil irritable tempers.

Bridget's reserve was a subtle quality. She was as reserved to herself, I think, as to anyone. Her words were, more often than not, a cloak for her thoughts ; and she spoke with a truthful directness that convinced her hearers, and sometimes, perhaps, herself. She did not deceive herself with flattery : the opinions which she said she held were always narrow ; the motives she assigned to herself were always unadmirable ; her nature, she said, was cramped, and incapable of the larger, generous virtues ;

her mind, so she said, dwelt always on the prosaic side of life, and her inclination was to disbelieve in any other; she had no love, she said, for humanity, the sorrows of mankind had always failed to touch her; she could bear to contemplate a starving peasantry more easily than the lack of marmalade at tea; her soul, she declared, had one window only, and that was an earthward window which did not look beyond the narrow sphere of her own needs. Poor Bridget! Somewhere in the world, as she goes about her work, she is telling herself, no doubt, with more or less success, the same story about herself still.

For eight or nine months I lived with Bridget without ever catching a glimpse beneath the surface. Then events happened that made me doubt her own estimate of herself.

It was an afternoon late in October, and we were coming home together from the day-school where we taught, walking briskly because the wind was chill and the clouds overhead looked heavy with rain. As we neared home, at a wide crossing, where a noisier, busier street cut our own at right angles, we stood still to wait. The confusion there was bewildering this afternoon. Half-a-dozen shrill-voiced children were marching by in disorderly file, beating strange drum-taps on a battered tea-tray and an old tin kettle. A waggon heavily laden with planks rumbled slowly up the street; down the street, with a dull, heavy, monotonous thud over the stones, came a traction-engine, black, hideous, diabolical. I was talking to Bridget and observing her to see whether she acquiesced in what I said, when a look of horror flashed across her face, and suddenly she darted forward. A child was crossing the road and had fallen. Next moment Bridget held him in her arms, and the engine was booming past over the spot where he had lain. She was in the middle of the crossing, and ran to the other side, just escaping the heavy waggon, which the driver hurriedly pulled back. A jutting plank touched her arm, and bruised and grazed the child's cheek and brow; but the hurts were slight, and Bridget moved away quickly from the sympathetic crowd that began to gather.

'No need to make a fuss, Alice,' she said quickly, as I joined her. 'There was nothing heroic in it—it was a very reasonable thing to do.'

The child was a pretty, sturdy little fellow of about three years old, poorly but cleanly dressed, with a little blue pinafore tied about him, ornamented here and there with a strangely-constructed patch, sewn in with big white cotton stitches by some

awkward hand. He was screaming lustily, and Bridget still held him in her arms as she walked on. Two or three members of the tin-instrument band followed at our heels, and volunteered shrill information.

‘Missus, *I*ll tell yer who he is.’

‘He’s Willy Verity, that’s his name, missus.’

‘Missus, *I* know’n.’

‘*I* know where he lives, an’ *I* know his father too.’

‘Will Verity—that’s who his father is—that’s who he belongs to, missus.’

‘Down in Clare Court. No. 3.’

The good-natured, well-informed crew followed us up the quiet street to our own door. Bridget looked down in a calming, quieting way upon them.

‘You can go home now, little boys,’ she said. ‘Thank you. Good afternoon.’

I could not help smiling at the sudden change that fell on all their faces. They stood away from the doorstep, a pathetic little band, grown suddenly silent, forlorn, and of no consequence. Bridget closed the door, and brought the child into our sitting-room.

‘Clare Court is quite near,’ I said.

‘Is it?’ said Bridget indifferently.

‘His mother may be anxious about him. Shall we take him home?’ said I.

‘Yes; his mother may be anxious about him. That is what I hope,’ said Bridget calmly and judicially. ‘I shall keep him here for an hour or two, then we can take him to the nearest police-station and leave his mother to find him. His cheek is a little cut; get some plaster, Alice. You are not killed this time, Willie, so I would stop crying if I were you.’

The child obeyed the voice of authority and stopped crying for a moment, looking up tentatively with wide brown eyes at Bridget to discover whether it was safe to begin again. The doubt was quickly resolved; he checked his sobs and sat upright on the sofa, watching Bridget solemnly as she knelt beside him. Together we patched the wounded cheek, coaxed the bruise on his forehead into a healthy blueness, and bathed his little grazed knees and fists; and his brown eyes watched us closely with a grave earnest interest in all our movements. He seemed contented enough in his new quarters, drank the milk that Bridget brought him, and looked up over the cup whilst he drank to laugh

confidingly into Bridget's eyes, and by-and-by settled himself cosily into the warm corner of the sofa and fell asleep against the cushion.

The afternoon wore away, and the gas was lighted in our sitting-room. Bridget sat before the fire and sewed, and talked judicially in an unemotional way. 'A careless mother needs to be taught a lesson,' she said. 'The more painful the experience, the longer she will remember it. You are pitiful, Alice. Yes—I am not. It satisfies me to inflict punishments.'

A footstep came past our window and stopped, and presently a bell rang. Our landlady shuffled through the passage to the door, and presently shuffled into our sitting-room and brought in a visitor.

'A man o' th' name o' Verity,' she said. 'He's come after his little boy—the boy's father, miss.'

Verity came forward into the light. He was a tall, strong-limbed, square-shouldered man of thirty-two or three—a workman in a workman's dress, and with a workman's rough, strong, hardened hands and muscular wrists—a good-looking man, with a well-shaped mouth and chin, shaggy eyebrows that the sun had bleached, and grave, grey, pleasant eyes that looked away from me at Bridget. Bridget rose from her seat, and it was to her that he spoke.

'I'm come after my little lad,' he said, making his big voice gentle. 'I'm obliged to you for being troubled with him. And I'm more obliged to you for what I'm told you did.'

Bridget was standing by the sofa. She looked up at Verity slowly with a calm impassive glance.

'As the child was there,' she said, 'the reasonable thing to do was to carry him out of danger. It was a pity he was there.'

She had meant to say more, I think, but, looking up at Verity and meeting his glance, she forgot her own intention. There was a simple dignity, a manliness about him that enforced respect. He was not a man whom a woman would ever lecture lightly; the woman would be bold who dared to blame his wife to him.

'He is a very little child,' she said mildly, 'to run about the streets alone.'

Verity bent down and lifted the child into his arms, putting the curly head, in an awkward tender way, against his shoulder. 'He's no business in the streets,' he said. 'Poor little lad! They forget to look after him, and I'm out by day. That's all the use a father is!'



'Has he no mother?' asked Bridget, a little awkwardly but with gentleness.

'No, no mother,' said Verity gruffly, looking away from Bridget.

There was a moment's pause. The child was sleeping soundly against his father's shoulder; the father and Bridget both watched him in silence. Then, as though reluctantly, the man moved to go. 'Well,' he said, 'he's growing up, he'll be a big lad soon.'

Bridget stood holding open the door. She looked at the child, and then looked a little farther up into the father's face and smiled. To see Bridget smile was the rarest sight.

'That "soon" seems a good way off,' she said.

'A year or two,' said the man.

They passed out of the room together. Bridget went through the passage with him to open the street door lest he should disturb the child. The cold outer air swept in as the door was opened, the man stood for a moment in the doorway, thanked her again and bade her 'good-night'; then his steps passed the window, and Bridget shut the door sharply, and came back to the sitting-room.

She did not begin to work at once. She stood musingly before the fire, and discoursed to herself and to me reflectively.

'Two hours wasted!' she said. 'Two good hours of the day! Let us never save a child again. Did you think that man would ever go?'

'Was he here many minutes?' I said.

'An unconscionable time!' said Bridget. 'He talked to me confidingly about his baby's woes—did it amuse you, Alice? He took me to be tender-hearted. He thinks I go about the world to pick up small, stray children, to plaster their cheeks and mend their knees and fists. It is strange to see oneself as a philanthropist—a benefactor of small babies. Do you like small babies, Alice?—and when their socks hang over their shoes in crumples, and their fingers are sticky with butter and cake?—do you still like them? Yes, some women do, I know—some women have wonderful souls. That man—what was the man, do you think?—certainly a *working* man. The working man does not interest me. That's a pagan sentiment in these philanthropic days—but let us be truthful sometimes. And now—now let us get to work. How we have wasted this afternoon!'

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## CHAPTER II.

It was one afternoon about a week later, and Bridget had been at home alone. The firelight and gaslight were bright as I came in, the room was cheerful. Bridget was sitting at the table, with open exercise books strewed before her, but she was looking idly at her work, with her pen held in a purposeless way, point upwards, and her glance abstracted. Amongst the books was a torn sheet of newspaper, and on the paper a grey stone thing, shaped like an obelisk, with a chiselled pattern ornamenting it.

'A present, Bridget?' I said.

'A present,' said Bridget.

'What is it?'

'What you see. Who shall say what it is! The man has made it—out of gratitude, I suppose.'

'The man?—the man whose child you saved?'

'What other man is there?' said Bridget, in a tone that, for her, was almost impatient. 'He brought it—I suppose he made it. What can I do? I cannot take it back.'

'No, you cannot take it back,' I agreed with decision.

'I might,' said Bridget. 'I should hurt his feelings, but that would not pain me much. I might take it back.'

'It would be ungracious—that is saying the least.'

'It would be troublesome, too, which is more important. I should have to find Clare Court. It sounds like a place where measles and scarlet fevers would abide. No, on second thoughts, I will not take it back.'

I held the little ornament in my hand and examined it. Bridget dipped her pen in the ink, and bent forward, but did not write. Five minutes afterwards she was still sitting in the same attitude.

'Whereabouts is Clare Court?' she said presently. 'I must take something to that child. The necessity to feel grateful is always oppressive to me—one must be very amiable to accept gifts and not desire to pay for them. What would a child of three play with?—one can get woolly, squeaking things—squeaking beasts on wheels. I will get something like that and take him.'

'You will brave the measles, then?' I said, smiling.

'From an unamiable motive,' said Bridget, caustically.

Whether or not Bridget carried out her intention and pur-

chased the 'squeaking beast' and sought Clare Court I did not hear. The weeks went by uneventfully. Bridget found a use for her stone obelisk, and stood it on loose papers as a weight; but she did not speak of Verity and his gift again.

The winter seemed to come upon us early that year; the winter distress seemed greater than usual. As we set out for school in the mornings, we met men who looked cold and pinched, and who glanced about them anxiously. As we came home in the afternoons, there were solitary figures standing about the corners of the streets—strong men, with their hands in their pockets, and their faces unexpectant, patient, or dogged. Bridget was more silent than I had ever known her; she had nothing to say as we walked together. Yet the grey skies and the keen air seemed a tonic to her energies; she often left me by the fire in our sitting-room and went out again.

One afternoon, as Bridget was writing at the table and I was reading, some small children, playing in the street, stopped outside our window, and a small despotic elder sister seated a younger brother on our window-sill, and held him there for a minute whilst she made her wishes known, in an eloquent shrill-voiced way, to her companions. The small boy turned and looked, unabashed, into the bright, fire-lit room, at Bridget and me, our apple-green tablecloth and gilt chandelier, and numberless antimacassars. The brown eyes and the big, contemplative gaze seemed almost familiar. I laughed as I looked up.

'He is like that other child,' I said carelessly, scarcely addressing Bridget.

'No, not much,' replied Bridget promptly.

'I wonder what has become of that child?' I said.

Bridget sat upright in her chair and turned the leaves of her dictionary. She seemed unsure whether the word she sought might be found amongst the a's or z's; for once Bridget's thoughts were distracted—I thought she was trying to remember something.

'I meant the child you saved that day,' I said. 'You remember him? Do you remember the father—the man Verity? I wonder what has become of Verity.'

'He is out of work,' said Bridget, slowly and quietly. She gave up her search in the dictionary and went to the window, as far away as possible from where I was sitting. She stood looking out, and the children on the pavement gathered up their babies and moved away to a more private spot.

'What makes you think he is out of work?' I asked.

'I *know* it,' replied Bridget concisely. For a moment or two longer she stood looking out at the deserted street; then she came back to her seat. 'I have seen him,' she explained; and she put her elbow on the table, and rested her chin on her hand, and sat looking at me for a minute with an almost aggressively matter-of-fact, unemotional glance.

'Has he been out of work long?' I inquired.

'A good many weeks,' replied Bridget.

We were both silent for a while. Bridget still sat looking at me with a grave and impassive glance.

'It is very hard,' I said at last, sighing.

'Yes. We do not really care,' said Bridget. 'We say it is hard—it does not touch us. It touches you, perhaps. But I—no, it does not touch me at all. There are twenty thousand men out of work in London—twenty thousand men with too little bread to eat—and I still desire unnecessary sugar in my coffee and tea. I am not imaginative—I cannot feel other people's cold and hunger; it is the misery of other people—it does not touch me.'

Her voice shook a little. She drew her chair nearer the table. She checked what might have been a sigh, and bent over her books again. All the rest of that afternoon she was very diligent. When I asked another question she answered briefly in an abstracted tone, and wrote a criticism in the margin of an exercise book whilst she spoke.

It was a week or two after that, and early in December. Bridget had been out, and had come home tired and little inclined to talk. She took up a school history, and sat beside the fire reading, and the evening passed silently. Once or twice, glancing up, I found her looking away from the book she held. I do not think she knew how her face was betraying her. It was sad with a most tragic sadness. She was brooding over some more than common sorrow. The sorrow was not wholly her own, for her eyes had softened with a look of exceeding, yearning pity. And the sorrow was of that sort that numbs the courage, for her face expressed hopelessness—conscious helplessness.

It was late in the evening, and the house and street were quiet. A clock was ticking in the kitchen, and its voice seemed loud in the silence. When anyone passed our window, we heard the steps advance and die away. Suddenly, as a step approached, Bridget sat upright, with a startled look, and listened. She put

down the book she held and rose hastily. Her face, which had been pale, had suddenly grown crimson. The door-bell rang. A minute later our landlady ushered in a visitor—a tall, roughly-dressed man, whose face I seemed to know. At a second glance I remembered clearly: it was our old visitor Verity.

He had altered since I had seen him last. He was shabbier, paler, and thinner; his face had a graver, more anxious look, and his kindly eyes seemed deeper set. He came forward a little way into the room; then he waited, and looked with a sort of grave embarrassment at Bridget, as though his errand were difficult to state. What surprised me most was that Bridget seemed to know his errand, and did not need him to explain it. She had glanced at him quickly as he entered, and had looked away at once. She stood still, silent and confused, and waited. It was as though Verity had come to accuse her of some sin; she shrank from meeting his glance; she seemed to know that his words would hurt her. Her colour came and went, her hands were trembling, and she put them behind her and folded them tightly together.

‘You came—this afternoon—to look after Willie?’ said the man slowly and tentatively, at last.

Bridget said ‘Yes,’ I think; but she said it so softly that I did not catch the word.

Verity was holding something in his hand. He put it down now on the table close to Bridget—a small, round, newspaper packet about the size of a sovereign or a shilling. ‘It’s not that I won’t take it,’ he said. ‘But Willie—Willie’s all he wants. It’s late in th’ evening to come like this; I’d been out. You’ll not take it wrong my bringing this back.’

Bridget put out her hand and drew the packet towards her; but she said nothing. The voice of the kitchen clock came loudly through the silence.

‘Twas you left it?’ said Verity after a minute.

Bridget looked down at the little packet, and fingered it nervously, and was still silent. Her silence answered him.

‘Yes. I knew that,’ he said.

He came a little nearer the table, and he stood looking down at her, with a look that I did not understand, with respect that was almost reverence, and yet with infinite tenderness. For a moment neither spoke; then Bridget said abruptly and inconsequently: ‘I—I am sorry. I knew—I knew before—you would not—ever—let me help——’ She spoke with an effort; and

her voice shook a little, perhaps with her effort to speak so steadily and calmly.

‘There’s nothing Willie’s wanting for,’ he said, ‘else I’d take it, an’ be glad.’

She looked up at him quickly with an impatient movement; her face was flushed, her lips were tremulous with passionate feeling. ‘You will let me do nothing!’ she said. ‘Nothing! Nothing!’

Verity answered quietly, and looked at her steadily and gently as he spoke. ‘If there’s anything I’m like to remember all my days,’ he said, ‘it’s you an’ what you’ve done. You’ve kept Willie—pretty near. He’d have gone short most days else. As for me, I’m different, I’m not like a bit of a lad. I’m used to hard times. They’ll go by again.’

Bridget’s courage and passion had been short-lived. She had nothing more to urge. She stood looking down again, nervously touching the little packet he had brought back to her. He watched her for a minute wistfully; then he moved to go.

‘I’ll be going back,’ he said.

Bridget moved too. Her face was colourless; her eyes as she raised them slowly had no light in them.

‘So I’ll say “good-night,”’ he said.

‘Yes. Good-night,’ said Bridget.

She stood still by the table until his steps had passed the window and died away. Then she came back to her seat by the fire, and took up the book she had been reading all the evening; and for the rest of the evening she never remembered to turn a page.

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### CHAPTER III.

WEEK by week, month by month, the winter dragged by. I went away for Christmas holidays, but Bridget stayed behind and spent her Christmas alone. She meant to work hard, she said; she had always had plans for reading logic, and now was a fitting time—and physiology for a teacher might be a useful science. The little Huxley was well worn, indeed, when the month was over; John Stuart Mill opened easily at any page, and Bridget looked as thin and pale and weary as though she had studied hard for twelve hours a day every day of every week.

She had never referred to Verity’s last visit. She never volun-



tarily spoke of him to me. Once or twice I questioned her, but she answered briefly and unwillingly.

'Is he out of work still?' I asked, when, one day, I ventured to mention him.

'Still,' said Bridget; 'are you bored with the sameness of it?'

'It is very hard for him, Bridget,' I said. 'It is very, *very* hard.'

'Is it?' said Bridget.

'My heart aches to think of him.'

'Think of something else,' said Bridget drily. 'It is a pity your heart should ache.'

After that I asked no more questions; I was sorry for Verity, but I could not express my sympathy. Bridget had made it too difficult.

I heard no more of him for some weeks. Then, one afternoon, I learnt by chance what Bridget was planning for him.

We had come in from school together. In our sitting-room, waiting for us, was a portly, dark-haired, bearded man, in a clerical coat and white tie, who came forward eagerly to meet Bridget, and took the hand she gave him in both his own and held it impressively. His hands were white and fat; he smiled at her in a comfortable, well-pleased way, and his little brown eyes looked long and familiarly into hers. Bridget smiled too, a nervous, half-conciliating, but frosty little smile. Then she released her hand and turned to me. She introduced her visitor—her cousin, Eustace Powell. He was suddenly and for a brief space of time overwhelmed with delight at meeting me, and turned again immediately to Bridget. His voice was deep, musical, but complacent.

'I received your letter,' he said. 'I have come in person, you see, to answer it. Own, now, that you thought I should come.'

'No,' said Bridget quickly. 'I did not mean to trouble you so much; I thought you would write to me.'

'My greatest happiness is, as you know, to be of service to you, even in the smallest matters—even in so small a matter as this. You are beginning to understand that—to believe that—at last.'

'I knew—if I asked you—you would help me,' said Bridget, in a low voice. And she shivered a little and moved away towards the fire. He followed her.

'I was quite the best person to ask,' he said, laughing down at her.

'Yes; no one else had friends in America; you lived there so long—you still know people there who have—who have influence——'

'A few. You must tell me more definitely—whom is their influence to be exerted for? A working man? and out of work?—that is what they all say, you know; they are *all* out of work! Well, emigration is the best thing for them. I would force them all to emigrate. The man has encumbrances, I suppose?—that they all have.'

'Encumbrances?' repeated Bridget.

'A family, I mean.'

'There is one child. That is all.'

'And a wife?'

'No. His wife—she—she is living, but she left him. She went away from him—two years ago.'

'Ah! Well, we must talk this over. You must tell me how you want me to help, exactly what you want me to do. As you know, I am only too happy to be commanded.'

He glanced half round at me as he spoke, and it seemed to me that he wished to talk alone with Bridget. I crossed the room, and went away.

I stayed away a long while. I expected to find Bridget alone when I came downstairs again. But I had come a minute too soon. The sitting-room door opened as I reached it, and Bridget and her cousin stood together just inside the room. He held her hand in his, and smiled as he looked down at her.

'And I am not to disclose to this lucky *protégé* that it is for your sake I am taking such a tender interest in him? I will remember,' he said complacently, with mild amusement.

'It is of no importance—but—I wish it,' said Bridget gravely.

'Your wish is my law, you know. Yes, he shall have his passage—I will see him to-night. And I will write to New York—to the Magills—about him. He may think himself lucky. No, I'll not tell him that. He's a little—a little difficult—a little independent, eh? That's the worst of your working men. But I'm diplomatic—I'll humour him. He'll not refuse my offer. Refuse it? He'll jump at it! I'm proud of my diplomacy. I always gain my way. Own it, Bridget—I always gain my way—at last; you'll grant that now. Good-bye. And afterwards I shall come again to be thanked.'

‘Yes. Good-bye,’ said Bridget.

She drew a long breath of relief as the door shut. She came and sat down on a stool by the fire, and sighed again and shivered. Presently she looked up at me suddenly, her eyes bright with strange excitement and all her self-control gone.

‘Talk, Alice — talk,’ she said. ‘Say anything. Talk to me.’

I knelt down beside her on the rug. She had bidden me talk, but I could find nothing that I might say. She put her elbows on her knees, and bent down her head in her hands, and for a minute her reserve had deserted her with her self-control. She spoke in a quick, involuntary way.

‘I think—almost—I hate him,’ she said.

She was silent for a minute, and I knelt beside her stupidly dumb.

‘There was no one else,’ she said, ‘no one else to ask. No one who could do what he could do.’

‘You have asked him to help you—to help Verity?’

‘Yes; help him to go away. To another country—where—where he will be happier. He will give him money, help him to go. He can help him when he gets there.’

‘Has he promised?’

‘Promised—yes,’ said Bridget drearily. ‘And I—I have promised too. He is not generous, he was never generous; if he gives a promise, he exacts one. I have promised—half promised—to marry Eustace. It is true. I always told you that I was not good.’

She raised her head, and poised her chin on her hands, and sat looking before her at the fire.

‘Do you know why I shall marry him?’ she asked after a moment in a different voice.

‘Yes,’ I replied.

‘You *think* so. I will tell you, you do not know. I am tired of working, Alice, that is it. I am tired of living in lodgings, and having a dirty hearth, and a rug with green roses on it. I want ease and leisure, luxury and comfort, all those things. I am practical, am I not? I think I shall be happy when I have a tiled grate and polished fireirons. Furniture makes so much difference. I think, just now, I was a little hysterical and talked nonsense. I often talk nonsense, you needn’t remember it.’

There was silence for a minute, whilst Bridget looked fixedly before her and I knelt by her side thinking.

'I did not know that about Verity—about his wife, I mean,' I said at last, musingly.

'Did you wish to know it?' said Bridget. 'I heard it—a long while ago—a week ago.'

'You did not tell me,' I said.

'Was it an important thing to tell? I—I have a headache, Alice. No, don't fuss about it—it is not very bad—a very ordinary headache. But I will go upstairs and lie down for a little while.'

When Bridget came back at teatime she was matter-of-fact and unemotional again, and took pains to remove from my mind any impression that she was sad. She was solicitous that my tea should be sweetened rightly, and explained with precision her views on girls' education and the disadvantages of a china teapot.

All the next few days Bridget was even-tempered, quiet, impassive, strikingly sensible. She made it clear to me that she was undistracted, that her mind was always 'on the spot,' ready to give undivided, cool attention to geography lessons, the weekly bills, and the change of wind to the east or west. But she sat upstairs in her room, alone, longer and oftener than was quite consistent. When one day I went up in search of her, she was sitting near her window sewing fast. She put down her work suddenly in a shapeless mass in her lap, and looked at me half guiltily for a moment. Next moment she resented her own confusion, and lifted the little garment she was making and began to sew again. It was a boy's little flannel blouse; she was just finishing it.

'It is so cold up here,' I said. 'Bring your work downstairs, Bridget.'

She put the last stitches in the blouse and laid it down. By the window beside her there was a little parcel of uncut flannel and calico. Her eyes rested on it.

'Have you other things to make?' I asked. 'Will you let me help about them?'

Bridget gazed out over the house-tops at the grey, heavy sky, and did not look at me.

'Will you help?' she said.

'I shall like to,' I replied.

We carried down the bundle of uncut stuff, and Bridget, without talking much, laid it out smoothly on the table and shaped small garments from it, fit for a child of three. For many days we spent all our spare time with these little garments

in our hands; we talked gravely about the width of our hems, the size of our buttonholes, the necessity of strings and buttons being firm; but why we were working so diligently, and for whom our work was intended, Bridget never said. Perhaps she knew that I understood. But she was glad, I think, that I let her be silent.

The things were finished; Bridget gathered them together and carried them away from our sitting-room, and I saw no more of them. Her spare time hung heavy on her hands; she brought down a ragged algebra from the shelf and worked problems with a perseverance that was without enthusiasm. Every day she seemed to grow more still, more self-repressed. She repeated her Latin verbs a little less slowly than usual as she arose and went to bed. She seemed to be talking down her thoughts; and one night her voice broke off sharply in the middle of a tense, and the tense remained unfinished. Minutes afterwards it seemed to me that Bridget was crying in her room.

She was pale when she came down next day. Her eyes had dark rings about them, and looked in a chill and dreary way at the world, as though nothing humorous or gay could make her smile again. She went away alone to school, and returned alone. All the afternoon she sat at the table, with a book before her, and her hand propping her brow as she bent over the page. I think she was listening all the while; she heard every sound in the street, and held her breath every now and then to listen more intently.

The rain beat quietly against the window; the grey sky overhead seemed as low as the house-tops; the passers-by looked cold and forlorn as they hurried past. I was glad when the afternoon was over, when I could draw the blind and shut out the gloomy street. I lit the gas and made the fire brighter; but Bridget went away from the warmth and light, and carried her books to the window, and sat all the evening at the little table there, her hand still propping her brow, and her eyes bent down in studious fashion.

The evening was growing late. I had heard no sound but the monotonous drip of the rain on the stones and against the pane, when suddenly Bridget raised her head and sat upright. Somehow I knew at once from her face that it was Verity, and I knew from the long, quick breath she drew that all the day she had been expecting him.

A minute later and Verity was standing in the room, and Bridget had risen to meet him. She put out her hand quietly, and he held it for a moment in his; and neither spoke. They

must have seen one another recently. She seemed to know why he had come to-night; he seemed to know that she had expected him.

When they spoke at last their voices were pitched low. Their tones were studiously quiet. They said very little, and they said it slowly, with care to speak steadily, without faltering.

‘I came up—for a moment—to you last,’ said Verity.

‘I wondered—when you would come,’ said Bridget.

They looked long and gravely with wistful eyes at one another, and looked slowly away again. Verity’s voice was a little husky as he spoke.

‘It’s good-bye,’ he said. ‘We’ve been saying good-bye all day.’

‘Willie and you?’

‘Yes. Willie and me.’

There was a little pause. Then Bridget spoke again.

‘Is it—early—that you go to-morrow?’

‘Yes—in the morning—early.’

‘Willie—Willie will like the voyage.’

Their speech was of safe commonplaces—little details of unemotional facts; but they spoke in slow, painfully still tones, and Bridget’s voice shook when her commonplace sentence was long. Her face was white, her lips had set themselves in lines of pain.

‘The sea air will be bracing—good for Willie,’ she said.

‘Yes, that’s true,’ he agreed. ‘And he wants setting up—he’s been weakly this winter.’

‘The winter has been so long,’ said Bridget—‘and cold—very cold. Little children—little children feel it.’

And there came another silence, longer than the last. The stock of commonplaces, the questions of fact, were exhausted. Bridget looked up and met Verity’s glance, and did not look away again. For nearly a minute they stood so, not speaking, looking drearily, hopelessly into one another’s eyes, telling the truth to one another silently in one long, lingering glance. Speech was not easy after that; they could not go back again to calm-voiced question and answer and even tones. Bridget put out her hand again, and Verity took it in both his own and held it. I think he tried to say ‘good-bye,’ and could not say it. I think Bridget tried too, and her voice failed her. Their lips formed the word silently; they looked for a moment longer into one another’s eyes, and looked away. They had bidden farewell to one another.



It was Bridget who moved first. She drew away her hand slowly, and moved aside to the table where her book lay open. She looked down blankly at the open page and waited. Verity left us; his step went quickly through the passage; for a moment there was a sound of wind and rain beating in, then the street-door shut and the house was quiet. Verity's step went past the window, and Bridget, without a word, sat down at the table before her open book, as she had been sitting all the evening. She rested her forehead on her hand, and she seemed to be reading. For an hour she sat there, never turning a page or moving.

At last she raised her head, shut her book slowly, and rose to put it in its place. On the shelf where our books stood she had put some loose papers, and the little obelisk that Verity had cut for her rested as a weight upon them. Bridget had to move it. The shelf was behind my chair; I could not see her as she stood there. The room was quiet; Bridget stood very still. Suddenly from behind me came a hard, dry little sob, and the room was quiet again.

I rose up quickly. 'Bridget!' I cried. 'Bridget—what is it?'

She did not turn for a moment; then her lips were still trembling, but she was trying to smile carelessly. She crossed the room, and was very busy and engrossed with much tidying and rearranging of many things. Then she came to the fire and knelt before it, holding out her hands to the blaze to impress me with a sense of her comfortable ease of mind and body.

I knelt down beside her and put my hand on her arm rather timidly.

'Bridget,' I said gently—'Bridget, I am sorry.'

'Sorry?' said Bridget slowly, not looking round. 'Why are you sorry, Alice?'

'I wish—I do wish you were happy, dear.'

Bridget waited a moment, then turned and looked up slowly at me. 'Yes, I *am* happy,' she said. Quite happy—in my own way, you know. People are happy differently. Some want so much. I never want much. Warmth—I have that, you see—good fires, comfort—just comfort—just a cat's wants—and I'm happy. Some people like more than that. Some people feel things—things hurt them. Not me—they never hurt me. I forget them. I forget them very soon. It's not what you would call the highest nature, mine. But I'm happy. It's a good thing to be happy, isn't it?'

SHELDON CLARKE.

## *Mephistopheles at the Lyceum.*

**M**R. IRVING'S reappearance, with renewed subtlety and power, in the part of Shylock has accentuated in one noteworthy way his success as Mephistopheles. The point specially referred to is found in the Trial scene, where for some time, while he listens to the dignified appeal of the Duke, the entreaty of Bassanio, and the less-tempered indignation of Gratiano, his eyes assume the same stony snakelike look which serves him so admirably at many turns of *Faust*. The same it may be called, but it is the same with a difference, and herein lies the import of the resemblance. The true actor, without actually disguising his own identity—a feat of difficulty useful for villains, detectives, and carpet-bag entertainers—yet so varies it that, to take the special instance just quoted, it may be that only a spectator trained to watchfulness of the stage would note that an expression of the eye which conveys in Shylock one meaning and in Mephistopheles another meaning is, from the physical point of view, the same in both cases. To put it as briefly as possible, avoiding the intricacies with which a distinguished French actor has lately surrounded the question, the great player seeks not to disguise, but to reveal his individual force and passion, fitting, however, his individuality to the different circumstances of every different part.

What is now proposed is to deal with Mr. Irving's playing of Mephistopheles. Until quite recent years Mephistopheles was known to the English public as a name, and to the French public by Terry's performance of the part in a kind of olla-podrida of Goethe's play, which performance led to one very striking result—the great Delacroix's very unequal and very powerful designs. Charles Kean and Phelps (and Devrient in a German play season) impressed their different talents on the character, but of late Mephistopheles has been familiar only through the medium of the opera stage, and the performance of M. Faure, one of the first lyric

players who, in England at least, undertook the part in Gounod's *Faust*, has never been surpassed, and rivalled only by Signor Nannetti in Boito's *Mefistofele*. But operatic acting differs from ordinary acting in many points, and it is not proposed here to compare the two except for purposes of illustration.

The Lyceum version of *Faust* is and is not a translation. It is not Goethe, but it leads to Goethe. It is an arrangement of scenes not strictly preserving the sequence of the original, yet suggesting in a manner the continuity of the First Part. Since its first production this fidelity has been further strengthened by the addition of the Witches' Kitchen, a scene which does not, of course, give any impulse to the action, but is a material element in the weird impressiveness of the Lyceum representations. In this scene the peculiar devilishness of Mr. Irving's devil is brought out as strongly as—although, and rightly, more quietly than—in the preceding scene.

In the opening scene the philosophical element has been consistently cut down; but we have Faust's disenchantment of life, his resolve to seek death, his change of view at hearing the Easter Hymn, and, ingeniously enough, his recognition of the hound, which was once curiously mistaken by a newspaper critic for the familiar attendant of Mephistopheles. With the old magicians it used to be a cat—but no matter for that. The transformation of the unseen hound into the living Mephistopheles is managed with so much skill that, as in the best German representations of *Faust*—the *Faust* of Goethe—the spectator has the impression of having seen the hound itself as well as its transformation into the travelling student. Here Mr. Irving breaks away from the German school of acting. Herr Jaffé, who is a Mephistopheles of fame, represented precisely the travelling student of Goethe, the diabolical character being barely indicated on his first appearance. Mr. Irving, who has had to compress the play, wisely reveals the character at once. The devil is in his eyes and in his features, and in an entirely different way he produces the same effect that M. Faure produced in the opera when he appeared in the first scene clothed in Satanic majesty. Afterwards, before the introduction of the Witches' Kitchen scene, there followed the scene between Mephistopheles, as a learned doctor, and the Student; and here Mr. Irving was certainly not at his worst. His playing in this scene was charged with irony, fine perception, and a biting incisiveness of tone which more than rivalled the performance of the German actor

just referred to in the same scene. It is unfortunate that the scene has been sacrificed, only to be restored at some future time, we may hope. The enunciation of the *Eritis sicut Deus, scientes bonum et malum* was as fine tragic comedy as could be wished for. In the conclusion of the first scene, Mr. Irving betters any Mephistopheles we can remember. His exultation at the signature is quiet yet intense; the thunder-peal which accompanies it is in keeping with the mastery that is seen in every glance and gesture; and the concluding words—

This cloak of mine shall be our magic car  
To waft us o'er the plains like two black eagles.  
Welcome, my friend, to this new life!  
A pleasant change. I wish you joy of it!—

are given with an air of mingled malice and mockery that carry off the halting in the verse. Of the scene of the Witches' Kitchen that follows we have already spoken. The change of style that succeeds when Mephistopheles encounters the revellers in the market-place—a brilliant and attractive scene—is one of the most striking circumstances in Mr. Irving's many-sided impersonation. His banter of the heavy but cheerful boors is delightfully compacted of their dull humour and his sardonic malice. His first approaches are thoroughly congenial, yet while he fools them to the top of their bent he makes them feel he is not a boon companion. He amuses them with jests and good liquor. When the wine turns to flame under their feet, they suspect him for a sorcerer, and he, with one rapid action, transfixes them to gibbering imbecility. His exit is a piece of art which is soon capped by his by-play with the group of women and girls on his speedy return.

This is an admirable example of Mr. Irving's invention. The chattering women stand together aside as Mephistopheles glides among them; they shrink from him with instinctive horror. Finally he attempts to propitiate a mother by noticing her child, but—as through the play—he betrays against his will his inhuman origin. This is an original characteristic of Mr. Irving's acting. The sneering comments on Faust's rapture at the sight of Margaret are given with marvellous concentration. And the terror at the sound of the church bells at the end of the act is so admirably represented as to form a perfect excuse for its inconsistency.

The second act shows us Margaret's chamber in which Mephistopheles appears momentarily; the second scene is that in

which Herr Jaffé makes one of his best effects. The lines given by Mr. Wills in the words—

If I were not the devil, I would cry  
The devil take me if I suffer it !—

are perhaps better given by Herr Jaffé than by Mr. Irving, because Herr Jaffé showed a greater petulance. But the English actor more than catches up the German as the scene progresses, and there is certainly nothing to seek in his subsequent and triumphant tempting of Faust. The lines written for his exit are not very strong in themselves, but the actor's power gives them value. In the next scene the part of Mephistopheles is not long, but it is very important. This is the garden scene of Gounod's opera, the scene in which M. Faure made so strong an impression, especially at the point when Mephistopheles asks for Frau Schwerdlein. It is Mr. Irving's merit that with an entirely different method he produces by this simple question an effect to the full as striking. Mr. Irving has all M. Faure's intellect and subtlety, and he has, in this particular passage, fuller opportunities of which he makes the very best use. The 'business' of Mephistopheles looking over the door, it may be here noted, is consecrated by German tradition, and is to the purpose.

The following scene in Martha's garden contains some of the best comedy acting that Mr. Irving gives. The appreciation, even while he is dreadfully bored, of the humour of the situations, and the biting sarcasm, veiled just enough to hoodwink Martha, are alike excellent. The delivery of the words 'dear little thing' after Martha's statement that she 'was a love-bird once,' is specially remarkable both for intonation and for facial expression. So again at the end of the scene the mocking repetition of Margaret's words to Faust, 'Thou king of all the world,' conveys in a singular fashion a mixture of contempt and delight in evil doing. Mephistopheles does not care to hurry the moment of destruction, but watches its inevitable approach with cold satisfaction. In the next two scenes, the first with Faust in a wood, the second in Margaret's garden, we may note two matters which may seem trivial, but which certainly have their value—the skill with which the actor varies his costume to suit the tone of each different scene, and in his exit after Faust the sinuous movement which he adopts almost throughout the part. The scene in Margaret's garden contains three remarkable points. In a previous scene in Margaret's bed-

room the actor has, like Herr Jaffé, indicated Mephistopheles's horror of the sacred symbol by recoiling slightly at sight of a cross on Margaret's table; here the situation is repeated with far stronger emphasis, and, it may be added, with complete inconsistency, by Mephistopheles breaking off his talk with Margaret, cowed and driven away by the sight of a cross which she holds up. It is a masterly piece of acting, but the thing is not only wanting in reason, but is actually against reason, as, but a short time afterwards, we find Mephistopheles completely at his ease in a cathedral with a choral service going on. [Precisely the same difficulty occurs, it will be remembered, in the opera, while in Goethe's play, as sometimes in German representations of Gounod's opera, the contradiction is more or less avoided by making the presence in the cathedral 'an evil spirit' and not Mephistopheles.] The second chief point in the scene of Margaret's garden is the redundant and bombastic speech in which Mephistopheles threatens Faust with physical horrors if he abandons his scheme of seduction. The idea is repugnant to people who do not regard it as an improvement on Goethe, but the introduction of the lines is forgiven for the sake of the actor's impressive delivery. This is closely followed by the laugh of triumph on which, as Faust and Margaret embrace, the curtain falls—a laugh pitched low in tone, and in so far unlike the devil's laugh told of in Théophile Gautier's *Deux Acteurs pour un Rôle*. Yet it is to the full as scathing as was that memorable utterance—the 'ricanement aigre comme le grincement d'une scie, ce rire de damné blasphémant les joies du paradis.'

The next scene passes before and in the cathedral, and the first part contains a version of the mocking serenade which Berlioz and Gounod have set to music. Mr. Irving's treatment of the one verse of this which he sings is full of meaning, and is managed with remarkable skill. The actor's restless playing in the scene inside the cathedral is, it may be thought, less to the point than the Satanic stillness which in the opera M. Faure preserved till the last moment, when with a withering look he revealed himself to Margaret. But the setting of the scene at the Lyceum seems to preclude this.

The scene of the Walpurgis Nacht on the Brocken retains some incidents of Goethe's scene, and notably the vision of Margaret with a red line round her throat, but is for the most part dependent on music and pantomime. It is, however, what must be called an absolute triumph of poetical staging. It is indeed difficult to



imagine anything better conceived and executed as a startling and picturesque representation of the Witches' Sabbath. The management of moving masses of figures, with their colours always blending harmoniously, rapidly changing and interchanging place, has an air of absolute spontaneity which is baffling to the spectator who knows that every individual movement must have been long and patiently rehearsed before the desired effect was attained. A specially striking point is the sudden emptying of the stage, when at a word from Mephistopheles the wild and gibbering crowd of fiendlike forms vanishes as into air, and the Red Figure is left dominating the scene in silence, broken only by a muttering of thunder. No less striking, in a different way, is the end of the scene, when Mephistopheles, having called for the wildest song and dance to distract Faust from thought of the vision of Margaret, mounts an eminence, and amid a rain of flame towers in command above the army of warlocks and witches, while at his back the mountain side seems dissolved with a flood of fire.

In the last scene the actor's opportunities are comparatively few, but they are made the most of, and the transposition of some lines of Goethe's which should properly have no place in this scene is palliated by the method of their rendering. The actor's baffled despair at the cry 'She's saved!' from above, and the swiftness and command of his 'Hither to me' as Mephistopheles disappears with Faust in a blinding lightning flash, are instinct with perception and art, and form a fit conclusion to a piece of acting which for high intellectual quality and closeness and accuracy in execution takes the highest rank. It should be added, although it has already been hinted, that in no play produced at his theatre has the manager more conclusively proved his command of artistic stage effect.

WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

## *Thraldom.*

BY JULIAN STURGIS.

### X.

NOT many hours later, young Tom Fane sat in his own room with his arms on the table before him, and his face pressed upon his arms. He had thrown off his coat when he first came in, but he had not felt the energy necessary to pull off his boots; and he sat in his hunting-breeches, with his knitted waistcoat unbuttoned and his stiff necktie pulled away from his throat. He was listening for his father's step.

At last the stairs creaked, the door opened, and old Tom Fane came in.

'Well, you may thank God,' he said, when he had shut the door behind him.

Young Tom looked up with a dazed look. His short curly hair was in a tangle, and the healthy colour of his cheeks was all in blotches. His face asked questions which his dry tongue could not frame.

'He has spoken,' said old Tom, 'and spoken sense. I have seen the doctor, and he says he'll do.'

Young Tom had been sitting with his face hidden from the painful light, and with his whole soul filled with a terrible fear lest his foe should die; but no sooner was this fear removed than hard upon the first relief there arose in him a faint regret. His head fell forward on his arms again, and he groaned and clenched his hands.

'And now,' said old Tom sternly, 'you must tell me what you meant by it.'

As his son made no answer, he went on with returning anger. 'By Heaven,' he said, 'I never saw such a thing. It was the

most—the most unsportsmanlike thing I ever saw. And it was my boy who did it!’

‘Father,’ said young Tom, blindly stretching out his hand, ‘don’t be too hard on me; you don’t know; I am so wretched; you don’t know.’

‘Then tell me,’ said old Tom, sitting down squarely on the opposite side of the table.

Then young Tom Fane began to pour out the story of his woes—of his love, which had grown from a pleasant pastime fed by the happy fancies of a boy to an overmastering passion, which shook his voice as he spoke. He had not gone far when his father broke in upon him with a new indignation.

‘And because you found out that you were being cut out by a rival, you rode at him like a coward to kill him. If that’s your excuse, Tom, I wish to Heaven I’d been deaf before you made it.’

As the voice of the older man trembled with the strength of his feeling, the younger recovered the mastery of himself. ‘Father,’ he said, and he looked him fairly in the face, ‘you don’t think that of me.’

‘Can you tell me that I didn’t see you ride at him?’

‘No.’

‘You rode at him?’

‘Yes.’

‘Very well then——’

‘I love Sibyl with all my heart and soul,’ said the young man, rising from his seat and speaking more slowly; ‘I can’t imagine my life going on year after year without her; but I would not try to injure—by Heaven, I would try to help any honest man and loyal gentleman whom she preferred before me. I have always had your example, sir.’

I do not know if he had ever called his father ‘sir’ before. Old Tom Fane looked at him with wonder, but with a growing hope. And yet he checked the hope in a moment. He could not understand, and he shook his head, as he was apt to do when he could not understand, and hunched his shoulders and frowned.

‘I rode at him,’ said young Tom, ‘because he turned and mocked me. I was in a fury; I had not an instant to think—oh, father, I know what it must have been for you to see!’

He went round the table and laid his hand upon his father’s shoulder. Old Tom Fane made no impatient movement under his son’s hand; he felt as if he saw daylight.

'What do you know against the fellow?' he asked.

'I know,' cried out young Tom with growing warmth, 'that he is taking my love from me by no fair means, but by some accursed devilry.'

'What do you mean?'

'I don't know what I mean,' he said, beginning to walk the room; 'but I know that Sibyl was as good as mine, that she was ready to love me, when this—this fellow by some devilish means began to win her away.' Walking up and down, he told his father how strange the girl had been, and above all how on that Sunday afternoon she had been so kind to him, and how and where he had seen her on the evening of the same day. 'Father,' he said, 'you know Sibyl; you know that she isn't a girl to encourage one man and let another make love to her—that she would sooner die than make secret appointments with anyone. I have been half mad and half ready to doubt her; but, when I think of her and try to see her face as it looked on that Sunday afternoon, I am as sure that she is true as that there is a sun in heaven. And since she is true, this wretchedness must be due to him and his devilry. That's what I felt when I went at him; I felt as if I were striking at one of his devilish West Indian snakes, and I wanted to kill him.'

Old Tom shuddered at this frank confession, and shook his head the more; he was in sore perplexity. 'What do you mean by devilry?' he asked. 'What do you suspect the fellow of?'

'I don't know,' said his son; 'I know nothing about these things; it seems to me that I know nothing about anything, and it's that that makes me feel so weak and makes me mad. The night I met him at dinner at Goring House he was full of stories of damnable Creole trickeries and juggleries; and I thought they were all lies and swagger.'

'Of course,' said his father; 'and so they are.'

'I have heard men talk of mesmerism and magnetism and things, but I never paid any attention to them.'

'Quite right too,' said old Tom Fane.

'But that's the sort of thing I feel about it,' said young Tom hotly. 'The fellow has made me creep from the first; I felt as if there were something uncanny about him, something which I could not fight. It seems absurd for us here to be fancying such things; but that is what I feel, and I can't help it.'

'Oh, rid your mind of that stuff,' said old Tom bluntly. 'It is likely enough that, if he's such a bad lot—and he certainly is a

rum 'un to look at—he is after the girl's money; and, finding you in the way, he has told her lies about you—frightened her perhaps—made her come to him for proofs or something. I do believe she's a good girl; but I take it that she is not one of the strong-minded sort.'

'All I know is,' said young Tom Fane, 'that Sibyl is good and true as an angel, and that this fellow has some bad influence over her; and, by Heaven, I'll have no thought nor care but to save her and to fight him.'

His father could not help looking at him with pride and love as he stood opposite to him with head up and clenched fists. 'But not with base weapons,' he said earnestly. 'To-day you fought with base weapons.'

'Yes,' said young Tom; 'and if I had killed him I should have been a——'

Old Tom roared out at him to drown the word. 'No matter for that!' he cried; 'it's all right now.'

'I'm glad I've told you all about it,' said his son; 'I feel better for telling you.'

'My poor boy,' said his father, 'my poor dear boy! And, by Heaven, we'll fight the fellow together, and best him too. Only, if he's the biggest cad unhung, we'll fight him like gentlemen.'

## XI.

HAVING made up his mind for a campaign, Mr. Fane senior was all for prompt action. He proposed to advance upon London, to attack Mr. Mervyn in his mercantile fastnesses, and to force him to acknowledge that the care of a child was a duty no less important than the accumulation of money. But to this plan his son was opposed, and he told his father the story of his own expedition to London and its absolute failure. He was sure that his father would only dash himself in his turn against the polished steel of the merchant's admirable sense, and would make no impression thereon. It is true that Mr. Mervyn did not know that his daughter had been seen hurrying at dusk from the Cottage garden; but young Tom Fane had a deep repugnance to any mention of that fact, even to the girl's own father, unless it should become undeniably necessary. He bound his father to remain absolutely silent about that evening vision; and he begged him to do nothing at all for him until he himself had made his next move and seen its effect.

'And what is your move?' asked old Tom, who was displeased at the prospect of inaction; for indeed he thought his boy in a most parlous state, being, as it were, confused by the heady passion of love, so that it had seemed no shame to ride at a brother sportsman in the hunting-field, and no absurdity to imagine a young man in an ordinary shooting-coat a dealer in black arts and unholy mysteries. 'What's your plan?' asked old Tom Fane, distrustful of dangerous or fantastic strategy.

'I shall go straight to Goring House,' said Tom, 'and ask to see Sibyl. I shall tell her that I love her, and ask her to be my wife. If she says "Yes," then she will tell me everything.'

This was a strong statement to make about an affianced woman, but old Tom only hunched his shoulders and kept silence.

'And I can be with her every day, and watch and guard her,' continued his son, 'and keep her from harm. And if she says "No"'—and here he stopped a moment for the lump in his throat—'I shall have shown her at least that I trust her wholly; and I will beg her, because I love and trust her wholly, though she will not take me for her husband, to talk to me as if I were her brother, and to tell me all about that man.'

'It's a manly and an honest course,' said old Tom, 'and I wish you luck and joy with all my heart—and a good wife.'

Young Tom Fane knew that his father was thinking of the wife whom he had lost six years before, and he went and took hold of his hand and squeezed it as a mark of sympathy. Mrs. Fane had been a good wife and a good mother, and memory of her was sad and sweet to both man and boy.

'But what am I to do?' asked old Tom after a minute shaking himself free, as it were, from memories which gave no help to the present purpose. 'I should like to do something to help you.'

'You have helped me enough,' said his son, 'by listening to me. I feel twice the man since I told you all about it; and it doesn't look half so bad. I can't think why I didn't come to you before.'

'Boys always go last to their fathers,' said old Tom curtly. 'I am glad that you came at last. But how about this fellow, who is in bed with a sore head? You have got to say to him that you did the wrong thing and are sorry.'

'I'll say it,' said young Tom with determination; 'and then I can ask him what he meant by what he said to me, and what



his pretensions are to—to her, and what the—the dickens he means by them, and——’

‘And then you’ll be at him again,’ said his father, ‘and have to go and make another apology, and so on for ever. No, my boy; I’ll take your apologies for you. I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll ride in to the doctor’s to-morrow morning early, and, if he’ll give me leave, I’ll go and see the fellow, and tell him you are sorry for the smash. Perhaps by the time the doctor will let me see him I shall be able to tell him that you are engaged to the young lady; and then you’ll see that, having got nothing for his trouble but an imperial crowner, he’ll take himself off and look out for another lady with expectations.’

So it came to pass that on the next day the two Fanes mounted the dogcart, and the father dropped the son at the lodge of Goring House, and drove himself on to the doctor’s house in the town. In the morning air, and with definite work before them, they had both been more happy; but when they met again, each saw discouragement in the other’s face, and the younger was by far the more gloomy. Indeed old Tom had expected little of that day. He had seen the doctor, had heard a good report of his patient, but had been warned to leave him alone for a few days. He did not like to wait with the regrets and apologies unspoken; they gave him a sort of indigestion; but still it was clear that he must not trouble de Courcy with such exciting stuff until the doctor pronounced him fit to receive visitors. He had hinted to his friend the doctor that his talk with the patient might produce a mild excitement, and he had been pleased to see that the doctor showed no sign of unusual knowingness. Old Tom had thought very carefully about the unlucky affair in the hunting-field, and he was almost sure that nobody but himself could have seen the collision, and indeed that nobody else was riding the same line. Now, if the injured man had told anybody of the cause of his nasty fall, old Tom had good reason to think that he would have told the doctor. So, on the whole, he made up his mind to patience; begged his medical friend to let him know as soon as de Courcy might receive a visitor; and hoped that his frank appeal for pardon would be in time to stop the painful story at its first flutter.

But if old Tom Fane accepted his first repulse with resignation, young Tom showed much less patience. He had advanced upon Goring House repeating to himself those fervid words

which were to win his love to full confidence. He would hear all which she had to say about that fellow and his ill-omened influence; he would hear; he would comfort; he would take her in his arms and make her promise to have no secrets from him for ever and ever. The mists of doubt and evil fancies would vanish before his ardour; he would see that he had been disquieted by shadows, and though he told himself that he must be prepared to find that confidence did not include the acceptance of him as a husband, yet his quick imagination running on before embraced the girl and saw her blushes and her timid acceptance of his love. Hurrying his feet he already felt himself in her presence, and so arriving at the front door he had found that that commonplace barrier kept him absolutely from the realisation of his dreams. He had eyed the respectful servant, who refused to admit him, as if he would like to force an entrance over his body; but the next moment he shuddered, for he remembered how short a time before he had yielded to one of these barbarous impulses and what result might have followed his yielding. What could he do or say? The footman informed him that neither lady was well enough to see anybody; that each was kept in her own room. Had he heard when Mr. Mervyn was expected back? No. Mr. Mervyn had said nothing about returning. He hoped that Miss Mervyn was not in any way seriously unwell. No, the doctor had been to see Miss Mervyn, and had said that she must keep quiet for a few days; he believed that the doctor's opinion was that Miss Mervyn was suffering from a shock. And Mrs. Vere? Mrs. Vere was also suffering from a shock. After this the servant had shown civil signs of a desire to leave the door, and Mr. Fane unable to think of any other speech had turned reluctantly away. On the next day Tom tried again to enter Goring House, but tried in vain. He returned to his father with deep discouragement. 'It must be an excuse,' he said; 'it's not likely that they are both too ill to see me.'

'Oh yes, it is,' said old Tom Fane, and he shook his head somewhat sadly; 'if there were twenty women in the house they might all be ill, every one of them, and every one of them giving the others the best advice, and not one of them taking it. You don't understand women.' Young Tom felt no desire to understand women; he only wished to see Sibyl. He was haunted by the fear that the shock from which she was suffering had been the news of de Courcy's accident; he was haunted by

fears and recurring questions, and only longed to disperse them before the sunshine of his lady's face.

As early as seemed permissible on the third day Tom made another effort. He heard without surprise that Miss Mervyn was not yet well enough to receive visitors; but the footman thought that perhaps Mrs. Vere would see him. Tom seized this slight advantage, and at once made his way to the drawing-room, while the servant went in search of the lady. He had not walked many times up and down the long room before the lady wrapped in a warm shawl came in. She came in with her usual propitiatory stoop, as if she came to meet the slightest advances more than halfway. It was so kind of Mr. Fane to come so often to inquire, and she was so sorry that she had not been able to see him on his former visits. She was so sorry too that their dear Sibyl was not yet well enough to leave her room, and she hoped that very soon their dear Sibyl would be strong enough to receive all her friends. She smiled with so engaging a mixture of affection and apology as she uttered this last hope, that the young man, though he rebelled at being included in the general mass of Miss Mervyn's friends, could only smile in answer as if she had promised him all which he wished. But he found, when he had left the house, that all which he had gained from his interview with the most polite of women was a lesson in the most conciliating manners; while on his side he had allowed it to be understood that he would come there no more until Mrs. Vere should write that Sibyl was downstairs. Mrs. Vere had promised to write as if she were conferring the greatest possible kindness, and it was not until they had parted that Tom began to wonder uneasily if her promise bound him to indefinite inaction. To do nothing was the worst thing in the world for Tom.

## XII.

SADDENED by his unsatisfactory interview with Mrs. Vere, and walking with none of his usual buoyancy, Tom passed through the shrubberies of Goring House, and from the end of one of the paths glanced without thinking at the door which led into the Cottage garden. The door stood open, and Tom was alert in a moment; it was an invitation to action. Without hesitation he entered the little garden, marched straight across the grass now softened by the genial weather, and so advanced towards the window which he had entered on his last unpleasant visit. He

was going to ask after the health of de Courcy, whom he supposed to be still in bed ; but that which had really moved him and, as it were, roused him to life again, was the hope of finding something to do and the excuse for lingering near his lady's home.

Tom was about to go round the house to the front door and to make his presence known by vigorous pounding thereon, when he saw that de Courcy was working at the easel, which stood—where it had stood before—just inside the window. He stopped short and looked at the painter, who was working with such zeal that, sensitive though he was, he was wholly unconscious of observation. In a moment Tom saw de Courcy's head turn from the canvas towards the interior of the room, and like a flash he remembered where the sitter's chair had stood when he had been in that room before. Each alternate minute the painter's head turned from his picture towards the place where the chair must be. He was painting from a sitter then. From whom? If the canvas were the same which had stood on the easel when Tom saw it last, then the sitter—not even to himself did he say who might be sitting in that chair, which he longed and feared to see. He could not burst open the window, lest the shock might injure her. He must go round then and get in as he could. Quickly and silently he turned the corner of the house ; and as he turned it his eye, exploring eagerly that side of the Cottage, saw that one of the windows on the ground floor was not bolted. He pushed up the sash and climbed over the sill. There and then came to him the thought that it was strange indeed that he of all men should be climbing like a conspirator into his rival's house, but he tossed the thought from him with scorn. Was this a time for nice distinctions? Should he stop to measure his conduct now with his ten-inch rule of 'good form'? Sibyl was there, or so he feared—Sibyl, his love, practised upon perhaps by vilest arts. His one duty, his one purpose was to take the shortest way which led to her. He must gain her side and guard her, though it were against the powers of hell. He delayed not a moment. From the room into which he had climbed he went straight into the narrow ill-lit passage, and from the passage he looked into that other room where, dark against the window with its northern light, the painter was at work.

Tom moved a little forward till he could see the surface of the canvas. It was the canvas which he had seen before ; it was the portrait of Sibyl.

De Courcy was working on the face of the portrait, and as

Tom looked at him his head turned again and again towards the place where the chair had stood. This was no painting from memory. A few steps more and Tom would see the sitter. This certainty turned him sick, and for a moment he could not move; then he crept forward, all intent, into the open doorway. And now he could see the chair. It was empty. Yet he had seen the painter's head turning again and again from canvas to chair, from chair to canvas. What could he believe? Could he trust his eyes? Had they tricked him, or did they trick him now? They ached with the effort to see what was not to be seen. Staring and with hands outstretched, eager to confirm by touch the verdict of his sight, he went forward stooping towards the chair. As he came near to it, and so between it and de Courcy, he heard a sharp cry behind him—a cry wrung from jarred nerves. He did not turn, for his hands were now upon the chair—the empty chair.

And now Tom turned at last and turned with fury. What new devilry was this, that a man should paint his lady's portrait from an empty chair? He turned with furious words upon his lips, but they never passed them, for turning he looked straight into the little deadly clustered rings of a revolver. De Courcy, pale from the effects of his fall, paler from unnatural absorption in his work, was staring at him with the pistol levelled at his head. Tom threw up his arm before his face, while through him flashed the great regret that here he must die in this accursed room, and see never again the pleasant light of the sun, nor hear again the music of the hounds. In an instant he would have dashed in upon his foe and chanced the shots, but suddenly de Courcy flung the pistol from him with another cry and threw himself face downward on the floor.

Relief as great as his regret possessed Tom as he saw his rival fall. He felt himself alive—alive and warm in every atom of his body. Then came amazement, for the man, who had stood erect a moment before with his life in his hand, lay now before his feet sobbing like a girl. There at his feet in that prostrate creature was all which he longed to know. But for the pity which tempered his scorn he would have tried to shake the truth out of him; as if forsooth by brutal force or any cunning dissection can be found a truth which lies hid in the frailest of mankind. Tom could not move de Courcy's tongue, nor, if he could move it, be sure that it would not lie. He stood looking down at the slender body shaken by sobs; he felt powerless before this excess of

weakness; he had not believed in the possibility of such a man. Then he began to hear broken words among the sobs, and suddenly the name of his love.

'Stop!' he cried out.

'Kill me if you like, said de Courcy, with his face still hidden. 'You tried to kill me the other day; kill me now.'

'Oh! stop that rot,' said Tom. 'I don't want to kill you. I behaved like a blackguard that day, and I ask your pardon. Get up, do.'

He helped de Courcy to his feet and into an arm-chair. The poor fellow looked white and weak; his long fingers clutched the arms of the chair, as if the world slipped from him; his eyes stared at the picture on the easel.

'For God's sake,' said Tom, 'tell me what it all means. Did she sit to you for that?'

'Once,' said de Courcy; 'she came here once with—with her companion, and sat there for a few minutes—there.' He pointed at the empty chair, and continued to gaze at it, till Tom, gazing too, half expected to see his lady's face.

'I can see her there now,' said de Courcy.

'What infernal——' began Tom, and stopped.

'I can see her there,' said de Courcy, 'when I choose—oh! I know what you think' (his words came more quickly)—'you think that I have some wonderful power; I have only a weakness—a wonderful weakness—that's all. I tell you that I am the weakest man alive, and the most wretched.'

'Do you love her?' asked Tom scarcely above his breath.

'With all my heart and soul,' cried out the other.

'And you are trying to marry her?'

'No. I would rather kill her.'

'Then you speak against her,' cried Tom fiercely; 'do you mean that she is not good enough for you?'

'Not good enough for me?' asked de Courcy with a sort of musing wonder. 'Why,' he went on, 'I never knew that good women were like that till I saw her. I was brought here, and I saw her, and I knew what life might be—how fair and good—and I knew what my life was—a slave's life. That's why I would rather die than marry her. You can understand that? No?' His voice was full of impatience again.

'How can I understand all this?' asked Tom in return. 'Only tell me this,' he added presently; 'do you know of any danger to her?'



De Courcy looked at him for a while, and then said 'Yes.'

'What is it?'

'I can't say.'

'You won't say!' cried Tom angrily.

'I can't,' said de Courcy again; and then, turning in his chair, and speaking more and more quickly, he went on: 'But I can say this: I can say to you that you are a man, and a brave man, and that if a danger threatens her you love, you should seize her and carry her away.'

'You say you love her and you tell me to do this!' cried Tom in sore amazement.

'Yes,' said de Courcy, 'for you are an honest man. I felt that from the first. I would have been your friend if you had allowed me—if I were fit to be the friend of any man. I tell you that I shall be happy, or at least not so wholly wretched, when I hear that she is your wife.'

Tom stared at this strange being, and wondered with all his power of wonder if he could believe him.

'Go to her,' said de Courcy passionately; 'plead with her, pray to her, beg her to go with you; go now; go before night; to-morrow may be too late.'

This appeal set fire to that deep longing to see her, and to see with his own eyes that all was well with her, which had tormented Tom's ardent spirit for the last days. 'But I can't even get into the house,' he said.

'Oh, you Englishmen!' said the other, as he sank back exhausted in the chair; 'if the last chance of life and love were inside the house, you would still go calling at the door with your eternal card-case and leave a card with your regrets. Break in,' he cried again with a sudden return of passion.

'You are right,' cried Tom with answering passion; 'I will see her.'

'Take that,' said de Courcy, pointing to the pistol on the floor.

'No; I shan't want anything of that sort. I'll manage.' He set his teeth like a bull-dog. 'And you won't tell me what threatens her?'

'I can't,' said the other again, and he wrung his hands.

'Well, I believe you,' said Tom; 'and I'll get in all right.' He hesitated awkwardly for a moment, came quickly and wrung de Courcy's hand, and hurried out of the house.

## XIII.

WHEN Tom left the Cottage the winter day was drawing to an end. Blood was hot in the young man; and the distance was so short between cottage and house, that he had to wait awhile on the grass before he could control the beating of his heart. When he was master of himself he went forward, and he had determined what he would do. When he was near to the house he turned away from the front door and went round the corner; he crossed the stable-yard, nodding, as he went, to one of the stablemen whom he knew, and advanced with a matter-of-course air to the back door, where a maid was chatting with a young tradesman from the town. In dealing with average men and women, if one does a strange thing as if it were commonplace, it is often accepted, for the moment at least, as commonplace. Tom passed the young housemaid in the doorway with a nod, and said, as he passed, that he had left something in the house; and the girl, after a vague stare at his back, resumed the conversation with her bashful admirer. Tom walked along the stone passage, where the gas was not yet lighted, as if he knew his way, and, as he hoped, he came upon the back stairs; he ran up them quickly.

Tom had considered his chances. He hoped to meet Sibyl face to face, when he would know well what to say. Indeed the words came crowding to his lips, till he dreaded his own confusion and forced himself to calm. If he did not meet Sibyl, it was likely that he would see some one of the women servants near her door, and he would send her with his matter-of-course air to tell Miss Mervyn that he must see her at once on a matter of great importance. There was one other whom he had prepared himself to meet, though he liked the prospect least, and that was Mrs. Vere. With Mrs. Vere he was ready to be curt and firm. He would not be humbugged again by her obsequious and protesting manner; he would say roundly that he had fears for the safety of the girl, whom she protected so feebly; he would claim the right to see the girl with his own eyes, and to hear from her own lips that all was well.

At the first landing on the back-stairs Tom found a door, which opened, as he expected, on to the more luxurious portion of the house. Indeed, he found himself in that dignified passage, from the end of which the front stairs—a spacious and stately

staircase—descended to the hall. In this passage he had been before, and he knew which of the many doors was that of Sibyl's sitting-room. It had been the schoolroom; and he remembered that Mrs. Vere's room, which had been that of the governess, opened into it. He saw that the passage, which was somewhat less dark than that below, was empty, and treading carefully on the thick carpet he came to the door of Sibyl's sitting-room. He could hear no sound. Then he remembered that there were double doors; and then he detected, in spite of the double doors, a faint suggestion of light. She was there then.

After a minute's delay Tom put his hand carefully on the handle of the outer door; it was locked. Then it came to him there, with his hand on the door, what evil luck it was that he, an upright young Englishman, should be compelled to these creeping courses. He realised with a new shock that this was he who was stepping softly in the dusk in his neighbour's house. A sudden sob of self-pity shook him. It was hard that in his gallant boyhood this need should come to him. All the habits of his race, of his family, of his life urged him to call aloud. He raised his hand to knock roundly on the panel, but he forced it to his side again; he was strong, and he held his peace. He was there to help—perhaps to save—Sibyl; that must be his only thought. The absolute candour which was dear to him had failed; he was there now to meet guile with guile. He would play his unwelcome part thoroughly, lest he should lose one chance of helping his love; he set his teeth and moved a-tiptoe like a conspirator.

Moving thus noiselessly, Tom went to the next door in the passage, listened a moment, peered and could detect no sign of light, and finally opened the door with extreme care, just so far that he could be sure that the room was dark. The room was dark and there was no inner door; and after another minute's listening he went in. He was now in Mrs. Vere's room, and, as he had hoped, the door between that and Sibyl's sitting-room was open, and in the latter was sufficient light. Standing in the dark he looked into that room which he, with other guests, had been allowed to see one happy day, when its maidenly familiar air had hushed his tongue and touched the finer chivalry within him. He had never forgotten the charm, sacred and homely too, which that nest of so sweet a bird had had for him; and now he saw it again. Standing unwelcome in the unfriendly darkness, he looked into that lighted room, and looked upon his lady's face; and her eyes turned him, as it seemed, to ice, as if they would kill him with their awful vacancy. The eyes which he loved were

wide open, but there was no thought nor feeling in them ; they stared straight towards him, and he looked as into the clear windows of an empty house. An hour ago he had looked into the muzzle of a pistol, and it was not so terrible as the girl's face.

While young Tom Fane stood there and could not move, Mrs. Vere came forward into the part of the room which he could see ; and the sight of her seemed to bring him back to life, to a less intolerable wonder and fear. It was Mrs. Vere, but unlike the feeble lady whom he had known. He had known an elderly lady huddled in wraps and shawls, with her almost obsequious stoop and her air of being always in the background. Now there came stalking into the field of his vision a woman who looked a full foot taller than the bending chaperon. Straight, alert, and vigorous, she came slowly forward, and her close-fitting gown showed a form somewhat flat and high-shouldered, but strong and active withal. Tom watched her with an agonised attention. He saw her advance towards the girl, slow and straight, all one embodied purpose. Then she began to speak slowly and with strong emphasis. 'To-morrow will be the day,' she said ; 'to-morrow you will be married. Put the veil about your head.'

Sibyl obedient raised her lovely arms and moved her hands about her hair as if they held a bridal veil, while her eyes still looked straight before her, showing no sign of joy or grief. The grace of the girl's movement awoke in her lover the most exquisite pang of all. He shut his eyes for a minute before he could look again. And now the woman had come close to the girl and pushed her face, full of her purpose, close to that sweet innocent face.

'Rub your cheek till the colour comes,' she said ; 'he will not like so white a bride.'

Submissive to the word the girl raised her hand to her cheek and began to rub it slowly.

'Look your loveliest for him,' said Mrs. Vere. 'Be beautiful for him and kind for him. Love him ; love him ; love him.' Her voice was more imperious with each word. 'To-morrow,' she said more slowly still and dwelling on each word, 'to-morrow you shall be wife of Gabriel de Courcy.'

Tom started as if at the cut of a whip across the face. 'Sibyl,' he cried out in pain, 'Sibyl !' and he went towards her with eager eyes ; he saw no sign that she had heard his voice. Only Mrs. Vere had leapt at the sound, and as he came into the lighted room she quickly stepped between him and the girl and

faced him with fierce eyes: at the same moment he felt his hand seized from behind and crushed as if the bones would break. His eyes fell on this cruel grasping hand and it was black; and, as he shuddered from head to foot, he felt a sharp stab in his helpless palm. He reeled, and as he reeled a dull blow fell on the back of his neck; visions whirled before him, the exquisite vacant face of his dear love, the black and loathsome hand with poisoned finger-nail; with a faint moan he fell unconscious to the floor.

## XIV.

‘It’s not a bad world in its way,’ said old Tom Fane; ‘if it wasn’t more good than bad the pickpockets would be on the bench and the swindlers in the pulpits, and we should be clapped in prison for refusing to plunder the widow and orphan.’

When Mr. Fane delivered himself of this opinion, he was sitting squarely in a chair in the library of Mr. Mervyn’s London house. It was his last effort to encourage Mr. Mervyn, who was sitting down and jumping up each alternate moment and repeating futile accusations against the world. His air of self-confidence and good sense was gone; he was restless, uncertain, irritable. ‘It’s all very well for you,’ he said angrily in answer to his good friend’s moralising.

It was not all very well for old Tom Fane, though he allowed the statement to pass. Not twenty-four hours before he had seen his boy, his only son, brought home unconscious; and he had left him on the morning of this day tormented by an angry fever. He had complete trust in his good friend the doctor, who had seen Tom and was hopeful about him; he had arranged for a frequent despatch of letters and telegrams, but yet it was hard to sit still and do nothing, to think of his boy tossing feverish on his bed at home and to sit there helpless and waiting. Nevertheless without a word wasted on his own anxiety he had taken the burden of his neighbour’s trouble. Since he could do nothing for his boy at home, and could do something for his neighbour in London, it had been obvious to old Tom Fane that to London he must go; and, since he had found his neighbour absolutely helpless, it was obvious to him that in London he must stay.

On the morning after the bringing home of his unconscious boy, Mr. Fane, when he had seen for himself that the doctor’s directions had been followed in every detail, had set out for the

Cottage. He had a notion that at the Cottage he might learn something of young Tom's accident. There was something peculiar in the accident, for no mark of injury could be found but a small wound in the palm of the hand. The doctor had looked long and curiously at this angry-looking spot, and had asked Mr. Fane if his son had been anywhere where he could have been handling poisoned weapons ; such a wound might have been made by the rude arrow-head of some savage tribe. So, when the doctor had paid his second visit early in the morning and had dressed the hand again and left all necessary directions, old Tom had taken his dogcart and driven himself over to the Cottage. To his surprise he had found the Cottage empty. He had walked in without difficulty when nobody came to answer the bell, and not only was there no servant to answer questions, but de Courcy, whom he had expected to find an invalid in bed, had vanished. He explored the little garden with the same want of success, and then went up to Goring House to see if anything was known there of the movements of their mysterious tenant. At the house he found nothing but a new surprise. Early as it was, Miss Mervyn and Mrs. Vere had gone away. The servants understood that they had gone to Mr. Mervyn in London. Mr. Fane did not betray his anxiety. He went back to the road, climbed into his dogcart and drove into the town and to the telegraph office. He sent a telegram to Mr. Mervyn, asking where Mrs. Vere was, and arranged that the answer should be taken to the doctor's house. He then drove home, ordered that his portmanteau should be packed while another horse was put into the cart, and went softly to his son's bedside. He could hardly bear to leave the poor boy, who lay moving and muttering in his fever ; but he had made up his mind that it was probable that he would be obliged to leave him. This sudden disappearance from both house and cottage disquieted him the more because he could not speak of his anxiety ; he saw that silence was of the utmost importance. He pushed the short curly hair from young Tom's forehead and kissed it lightly ; he sighed to feel how hot it was. Luckily his servants loved him ; and he was not afraid to leave his boy in their hands and in the doctor's. He only hoped with all his heart that when young Tom was able to ask questions he would be able to give him a comfortable answer about the inmates of Goring House. He knew that his boy's first rational question would be of Sibyl.

So Mr. Fane had left his son. He had driven his fresh horse



into the town and straight to the doctor's house. At the doctor's house he found the answer to his telegram. 'Have heard nothing from Mrs. Vere,' Mr. Mervyn had telegraphed; 'is she not at Goring with Sibyl?' Mr. Mervyn then knew nothing of their leaving home; and Mr. Fane's anxiety was doubled. He wrote a note at the doctor's desk, asking him to keep him constantly informed of Tom's progress and giving Mr. Mervyn's London address as his own till further notice. Then he drove to the station, and went with his portmanteau by the first train to London.

No more comfortable intelligence had greeted Mr. Fane in London. Mr. Mervyn, in whom the telegram had aroused only the slightest anxiety, was overwhelmed by the news of his daughter's disappearance. He could offer no suggestion of the cause or the destination of the strange flight; and he was so incapable of action that Mr. Fane asked nothing of him but absolute silence and an appearance of decent calm. Then old Tom Fane set to work. He summoned Mr. Mervyn's own man, and told him that his master was much disturbed about Miss Sibyl's health; that she had been sent at a moment's notice to the sea with Mrs. Vere; that absolute rest was of vital importance, and that all letters for her or for Mrs. Vere were to be taken to Mr. Mervyn with his own hand, and would be forwarded by him if necessary. He wrote to the same effect to the housekeeper at Goring House, bidding her tell anybody who inquired for Miss Mervyn that she was to be kept quite quiet for a time at the seaside, and that by the orders of the London doctor, who had sent her to the sea, her address was to be given to nobody, as it was most important that she should receive neither visitors nor letters till her nerves were stronger. While he was doing his best for secrecy, Mr. Fane lost no time in putting the case in the hands of the most trustworthy detective whom he could find, with instructions to avoid all chance of publicity and to spare neither pains nor money. Indeed he promised a very large reward, in Mr. Mervyn's well-known name and without consulting that opulent gentleman. So Mr. Fane did all which could be done; and there was nothing left but to practise and to preach patience, to sit and wait with his friend, and to keep him as calm as he could.

They were weary hours for old Tom Fane. Talking with the clever detective he had had moments almost happy, in which he fancied himself consulting with the huntsman which cover should be drawn first; but now, as he sat with nothing to do but to wait,

his thoughts would wander back to the pleasant country air, and his eyes would turn to the dingy London sky, noting the way of the wind, which told him that it was a lovely hunting-day at home. And then each time he would remember that, if he were in his well-loved country, he would not be hunting the fox, for his poor boy was ill at home, and he would be watching by his bed. And then he would bring himself back to the place where he was, and return to the dull task of trying to preserve a decent calm in this most distressful merchant.

Mr. Mervyn, as the day waned, grew ever more restless and more trying. This thing which had happened was outside of his world of possibilities, and all the admirable sense, which had fitted him so well to cope with this world of his, was helpless before this incredible catastrophe. That his daughter, the carefully guarded child of a British merchant in this civilised nineteenth century, should have been kidnapped! That a lady of admirable appearance and manner, and recommended by such unexceptionable references, should have kidnapped his child! He, who had had such confidence in his judgment, he had been wrong in the most important choice which he had made since his choice of a wife. Finding that he was capable of making such a mistake in a matter so important, the poor gentleman, losing in a moment all confidence in himself, lost in the same moment all confidence in everything. If so prudent, so clear-sighted a man could be so deceived, what security was there in the world? His world had slipped away from him, and he stood staring, helpless, among whirling thoughts. He sat down; he jumped up; he walked about; he could not bear Mr. Fane to leave him for a moment, and he worried him with questions, almost with reproaches. He asked if this could not be done, or that; he found fault with his friend for making no new suggestions; he returned again and again to excuses for his misplaced confidence. No man had ever had such reasons for confidence; no woman had ever brought such letters of recommendation. He raved at the world, and he moaned over it; he pronounced it unutterably vile. His imagination, let loose from the narrow region of his experience, seemed capable of any flight. He imagined his child detained for years in fictitious Indian seas, till all his fortune had been drained from him in ransom; or married by force to a conjuror masquerading as a gentleman; or killed for hate. He was possessed by vague recollections of his boyhood's literature, which even in his decorous boyhood he had sneered at as exaggerated nonsense.

And old Tom Fane was patient in spite of all. Concerning the vileness of the world he had uttered his soothing protest. 'It is the best we've got at present,' he said—'and more good than bad.' To the extravagant visions of possible evil he would say nothing but 'Oh no, no; not so bad as that; it'll all come right;' while to the repeated excuses he said nothing at all, having wasted no breath in useless accusations. When the merchant demanded again and again if there was nothing to be done, he answered again and again with no sign of irritation that he had done all which was possible, and that they must wait patiently for news. 'We are sure to hear soon,' he said at intervals, and was answered only by despairing groan or impatient exclamation.

As night grew on the pleasant south-west wind grew to a gale and filled poor Mr. Mervyn with visions yet more terrific. He was sure that his child had been hurried to the coast, carried on board a fishing-boat, which was even now being broken by the storm; he was sure of any catastrophe which his imagination, now leaving far behind its habitual narrow bounds, sought far and near with exultation. The wind whistling at the street corners and howling in the chimneys filled him with fears; and when the storm broke over the immense city, he felt as if its thunder were hurled at his head, and the lightning sent to blast him.

At last, when the storm was passing away, Mr. Fane induced his unhappy companion to go to bed, promising that he would sit up, since news might come in the night; and when he had seen him tucked up, and had heard him, after many lamentations over the impossibility of sleep, snoring heavily in his bed, he went down again to his lonely vigil by the library fire, to listen for the bell and to think of his boy. And there he sat till dawn, patient for all his fear, patient though the night passed so slowly away, and no news came with the lagging light of the girl whom his dear boy loved.

## XV.

It was on the morning after his father's lonely watch in London that young Tom Fane at home awoke without fever. He was very weak, and he lay for a long time looking at the wall, almost too weak to think. He did not know what day it was, but he supposed that it was not early in the day, for the room was full of light. His first clear thought of himself was that it was strange that he should be lying in bed so late. What was the matter? He moved, and found himself so feeble that he smiled feebly at him-

self. Then he began to be tormented by an uncomfortable belief. He was sure that he ought to be giving his attention to something—that it was of vital importance that he should attend to it at once. But he could not remember what it was which he was bound to remember. So he lay weakly trying to revive the past. Something had happened which made it necessary for him to act at once. What had happened? What was he to do?

He could not lie quiet in bed, for his failure to remember became, as life grew stronger in him, a haunting pain. A bell-rope hung within reach, and after looking at it for some time he raised himself a little and stretched his hand to it; then he fell back on to his pillow, uncertain if his feeble pull had rung the bell or no. It seemed as if a long time passed and nobody came. He could lie there no longer. He put his feet to the floor and sat a minute with his eyes shut. Then he stood up, and then he walked slowly and carefully to the door and opened it. He meant to call his father, but when the door was open and he stood leaning on the handle he saw on the floor something which broke the weak connection of his thoughts. He forgot his purpose looking idly down at this unusual object. It was a common little glass bottle with a cork stuck in it. Still holding the door-handle tightly, he lowered himself to his knees and picked up the bottle, and then with great difficulty, since one hand was thus occupied, he regained his feet. He shut the door and leaned his back against it while he looked at the bottle; and as he looked a great disgust filled him. It was half filled with dirty liquid, and the only object distinctly visible in it was a drowned and bloated spider. It touched his sick memory and woke it to new strivings and ineffectual. What had he read, or seen, or heard about a dirty bottle left at a man's door? There was some horror in it, but he could not remember what. Had he dreamed of the poison of toads, of sordid magic, of the fantastic devilries of black men? He felt sick and faint; he scrambled to the window, lifted the light sash with all the strength he had, and threw the bottle into the shrubbery.

The cold clear air seemed for a minute pleasant to the poor boy as he stood there in his nightshirt, but presently it came in with double force, for the door had been opened behind him.

'Did you ring, sir? Glad to see you up, sir. We've been very uneasy. Jane said as she thought she heard the bell.'

Tom held out one arm, and his friendly young servant came and helped him back to bed.

‘Ask my father to come,’ said Tom when he was once more safe on his pillow.

‘Mr. Fane is out, sir.’

‘Hunting?’ Tom asked feebly; and then querulously, as his attendant did not answer. ‘Is he hunting?’ he said.

‘No, sir—not exactly,’ said the simple youth with some confusion.

‘Where is he?’

‘Well, sir, I wasn’t to say unless you asked pertic’lar.’

‘Where is he?’

‘In London.’

Old Tom Fane in London, and on a genial hunting-day! And it was to have been kept from him! There was something the matter then. Tom thought and thought with pain, and only added to his vague uneasiness. Suddenly he seemed to see the face of Sibyl—her face, but with some strangeness in it. He wondered that his first thought had not been of her. Was she the cause of this haunting, perplexing fear? Had anything happened to her? He could not remember.

‘I am hungry,’ he said at last.

‘Oh yes, sir,’ said the simple youth, beaming. ‘I quite forgot. Mrs. Blunt told me to let her know the moment you were awake. She has been with you night and day since you were took ill. She only went away half-an-hour ago, and I was to be sure to tell her the very moment you woke, and she would bring you up the broth herself.’

He stood beaming in a friendly manner.

‘Why don’t you tell her?’ asked Tom feebly.

‘Yes, sir;’ and he departed.

Mrs. Blunt had been Tom’s nurse, and when that office had been no longer necessary she had been promoted to the dignity of housekeeper. Old Tom Fane had even more confidence in her than in the doctor. She came now to the bedside of her poor boy very motherly and kind. The very sound of her gown was comfortable, and she carried in her hands a covered basin of hot broth with little strips of toast in its saucer. Tom pointed to the chair by his bedside; her presence had a soothing influence.

‘There, my poor dear,’ she said as she set the fragrant broth upon his knees.

Tom felt like a little boy again recovering from one of childhood’s maladies. He remembered how pleasant it used to be to find himself of unusual importance. He smiled like a child at

his old nurse, who had come, as in those distant days, to tempt his appetite.

'Now, do eat it, dear,' she said, 'while it's hot. And good it is too—as good as ever I smelt.'

Tom took the spoon with great readiness; his vague fears seemed to yield to the wholesome fragrance.

'And only to think,' said Mrs. Blunt, 'that it was made by a black woman!'

The spoon dropped with a clatter.

'There, there,' said the good old nurse, restoring the spoon to his fingers and patting up his pillows with the other hand; 'it's a good soup and you must take it, dear. It's Mr. de Courcy's cook at the Cottage made it—the same that brought you home, and a good woman, though black.'

'Brought me home?' asked Tom with sinking heart.

'Carried you all the way in her arms, as I used to carry you myself when you were a baby. It wasn't long before I had to give up carrying you—a great strong boy, and never quiet for a minute, never giving a body a rest. But there, these blacks are wonderful strong, to be sure. It's given them to make up for their complexions. And she has been here constant since; and she has been doing half the work for those idle girls. And I should have made your broth myself, as I always used when you were ill, which, thank Heaven, was but seldom and soon over, for a stronger child I never saw—never. Now, do you take it, dear.'

She patted the patient with her motherly hand, but he lay back with closed eyes, dizzy and sick.

'It's good Christian broth, dear,' continued Mrs. Blunt, 'for I watched her make it myself; and I couldn't refuse when she had been so kind and brought you home like a baby; and there was nothing outlandish but a morsel of a little innocent herb, which she said they always used in her country, though where that is indeed I cannot say—somewhere Africa-way, I suppose, judging by her complexion. Now, dear.'

Tom pushed the broth from him; he was filled with horror. The good woman pressed it on him again, but he could not even look at it.

'Take it away,' he said; 'please—please take it away.'

Mrs. Blunt had humoured many sick fancies in her time; and so she took up the rejected broth with a sigh and a slow shake of her cap-ribbons and departed. She promised herself to tempt her boy later with a little arrowroot of her own making.



And Tom lay back fasting, incredibly light, with wide open eyes. It seemed strange to him that he had weight enough to keep him on the bed—that he did not float away somewhere. He did not know if he were waking or sleeping, only he knew that his love's face looked in upon him, now vacant, now pleading tenderly. Where had he seen her? When had he seen her? What did she want with him? He could not remember; he could scarcely think. He did not know if he had seen in a dream those eyes that haunted him with their emptiness, or if waking he had seen them. The question tormented him. He could not tell if he were in a real world or a world of phantoms. Only from somewhere in this doubtful world the negress came again and again, growing greater as she came, black as the night through which she stumbled on her way and hugging to her breast a lifeless hanging body which was his, though he could see it there. His eyelids fell, but he could see it still: at last kind sleep came to him and forgetfulness.

The day which was so full of discomfort for young Tom Fane was scarcely more pleasant for his father, who spent it all in Mr. Mervyn's library in London. He needed all his fine old stock of patience, which had improved so steadily with age.

He was alone, for the man whom he was trying to help refused to leave his bed.

'What is the good,' he asked pettishly, 'since you won't let me do anything?'

Mr. Fane did not say how hard he found it to do nothing. But there was nothing to be done. He had arranged with the detective that if any discovery were made news should be sent to him there by the quickest means, and so there he was forced to wait. To move or to allow the girl's father to move was only to increase the chances of an odious publicity. And yet to sit still taxed his strength indeed. His dear boy was the subject of his long thoughts, and when he turned his mind from him it busied itself unbidden with the fate of the poor girl. The girl whom his boy loved so deeply was lost and in dangerous hands, and his boy lay weak and ill and might grow worse. And yet all those long hours he must sit still or pace the room for exercise. Twice in the day he got news of Tom. In the morning came the doctor's letter, written on the previous evening, and stating briefly that the patient had fallen into a quiet sleep, and permitting the hope that he would wake without fever. In the evening arrived a messenger from the doctor with a second letter, and Mr. Fane

read that the fever had gone, but that his boy was very weak and had shown an unaccountable aversion to food. The doctor was confident of his quick amendment if only he would eat; and if he could not induce him to eat he would telegraph to Mr. Fane, who must then come down and use his influence. At last the fitful light, which when the storm had passed away had shone through the ragged flying clouds and gleamed again and again pale yellow on the wet streets and pavements, was slowly withdrawn, and night at last began to fill the town. At last it seemed to old Tom Fane that the longest day of his life was drawing to a close. There had been sorrows in his happy life, those common heavy sorrows which such men as he bear with the simplest heroism, but he had never known a time of such anxiety as this, for he had always found or made for himself some task to do. Now he could only wait, absolutely idle, hoping and fearing. And now the day was done, and no news had come of the girl and very doubtful news of his dear boy.

## XVI.

WHEN old Tom Fane was troubled, nothing ever did him so much good as a thoroughly good wash. The hard rubbing of his honest face with a rough towel seemed always to put new courage into him. So after his long day in his friend's warm library it was a relief to him to snatch a few minutes from the departing day, to run upstairs, and to plunge his head into a basin of cold water, though, even while he was rubbing his head and face into a glow, he paused every minute lest he should miss the sound of the bell. When he had made an end of this rapid process, he went softly to Mr. Mervyn's room and assured himself that that disquieting person had fallen again into a heavy sleep. Then he went downstairs prepared to spend the night, as he had spent the day, in the accustomed library.

As he came downstairs, he heard the bell ring; and, though he had been expecting it so long, it gave him a shock of surprise. He hurried down, and before the servant could appear from below he had opened the front door. Someone wrapped in a big fur coat was on the doorstep. 'This is Mr. Mervyn's house?' asked the stranger quickly.

'Yes; come in,' said Mr. Fane.

'I must see him at once,' said the other, as he came into the hall—'for Heaven's sake don't stand there; go and say I must see him at once; it's about——'

‘Hush, and come in here,’ said Mr. Fane loudly, as the servant appeared. He nodded a dismissal to the servant, shut the front door, and drew the new-comer by the arm into the library. When he saw him in the lighted room, he looked at him for a moment, and then, ‘You are Mr. de Courcy,’ he said with decision.

‘Yes, yes. Now call Mr. Mervyn.’

‘One moment, one moment,’ said the good gentleman, nodding his head. ‘Mervyn’s asleep, and I shan’t wake him till I know that there’s something to wake him for; you can tell me—my name is Fane.’

‘Yes, yes, I know you now; you are his father. Then I tell you I bring news of her—of Miss Mervyn. Call her father, Mr. Fane. Just think what he must be suffering!’

‘He is asleep,’ repeated Mr. Fane emphatically. ‘I want you to tell me first. Is she safe and well?’ He leaned forward and looked earnestly into the young man’s face.

‘Yes,’ said de Courcy, ‘she is safe and well, thank God.’

‘Thank God!’ echoed the older man with a deeper note. ‘Where is she?’ he asked again.

‘At Arundel.’

‘Who is she with?’

‘She is with—with——’ And de Courcy hesitated a moment.

‘With Mrs. Vere?’ asked Mr. Fane.

‘Yes.’

‘And safe with her?’ asked o’d Tom with greater emphasis.

‘Yes, yes, I say. Ah, do let me tell her father!’

‘He is asleep,’ said old Tom again; ‘and, when he wakes, he had better hear nothing rather than false news.’

The young man threw up his hand with a gesture of despair. ‘Ah,’ he cried out, ‘I am the most wretched of men!’ Mr. Fane went and tried the door, fearful that if it were not tightly closed the raised voice might be heard. ‘Why should you believe me, or why should he believe me?’ continued de Courcy wildly. ‘Perhaps you think that I carried her away.’

‘Come, come,’ said Mr. Fane, ‘don’t get excited, and don’t talk too loud. Of all things we want it kept quiet. There! sit down and let us have a few words together. I want to believe you, you know; it is everything to us to believe you if we can. Nobody has said that you carried her away. You were with them, I suppose?’

‘Yes,’ said de Courcy, whom the elder man had gently pressed into an arm-chair; ‘yes, but——’

Old Tom checked him with uplifted hand, ‘Why did you go?’ he asked,

'Because I could not help it—because I was forced to go as much as if I had been dragged in chains. Oh, how can I make you believe me?'

'Oh, I know that men are weak,' said Mr. Fane; 'and I want to believe you. Who forced you to go?'

The young man looked up at him with a strange expression.

'Was it Mrs. Vere?' asked Mr. Fane.

'Yes,' answered the other in a low voice.

'And what did she want?' asked Mr. Fane, as honest indignation got the better of his judicial coolness. 'Why did the woman betray her trust?'

The young man started forward in his chair, but the elder again stopped him. 'I won't go into that,' he said. 'She has you in her control in some way, and at least she has repented and sent you here.'

De Courcy was about to speak eagerly, but seemed to think better of it. Old Tom Fane looked at him, and then he deliberately took the shade off the lamp and looked at him again. He made no pretence that he was not searching the face for signs of deceit. 'You tell me on your honour,' he asked, 'that the girl is safe and well?'

'Yes, yes, I swear it.'

'And she is at Arundel, and will stay there till we fetch her to-morrow?'

'Yes.'

'And you will stay with us, with her father and me, till we find her?'

'Yes,' said de Courcy with a certain eagerness; it had come to him that he would see the girl once again.

Mr. Fane looked steadily at him for a full minute more, and then, 'I believe you,' he said; 'and I'll go and fetch her father. No! I'll just ask you one more question first. Miss Mervyn has been seen by nobody who knew her?'

'By nobody.'

'They are at a hotel, or in lodgings?'

'In lodgings.'

'And what do they think at the lodgings?'

'Oh, nothing at all. It is only a young lady who has come for change with her lady companion.'

'And you?'

'They hardly saw me. I was at the inn. Oh yes, I swear to you that she is all right and that you shall hold me in your

hand, till I take you to her and you find her safe and well and place her in her father's keeping. You do believe me, don't you ?'

Old Tom Fane looked again into the eager face. 'Yes,' he said once more, 'I believe you. Wait here till I come back.'

Mr. Fane was absent but a short time. When he returned to the library, he stood at the door for a few minutes looking with a somewhat puzzled expression at the young man in the great arm-chair. De Courcy had unbuttoned his fur coat, and he lay back limp, on a rich background of fur. His eyes were closed, and the pallor of his face with the extreme lassitude of his lithe body and limbs touched the heart of the elder man with pity. The weary youth opened his eyes at the shutting of the door, and moved as if he would rise, but he only raised his eyebrows instead with a faint smile and a sigh and sank back in the deep chair.

'Mervyn is very sound asleep,' said Mr. Fane. 'I'm afraid he has been taking some nasty narcotic or something. He has been much upset. There's a woman sitting in the room next to his; and I told her to let me know as soon as he wakes. You ought to have some food.'

De Courcy shook his head. 'I can't eat,' he said.

Mr. Fane said nothing, but he left the room, and presently came back with some dry biscuits and a bottle of his host's best claret. 'And now let me help you off with your coat,' he said. 'You must be boiled.'

De Courcy with a faint smile allowed the other to help him from the chair and out of the coat. 'How good you are to me!' he said, as he sank down again and took the wine-glass from his new friend's hand; 'and yet you have reason enough—too much reason—to think me very bad.'

'Boiling won't make you better,' said old Tom sagely; 'and besides I don't believe you are very bad. It's the woman.' De Courcy looked at him with startled inquiry.

'Women are often at the bottom of mischief,' continued the man of longer experience. 'Now this woman, this Mrs. Vere—there's nothing to be said for her. She betrayed her trust.'

'Don't abuse her to me. For pity's sake don't abuse her. You won't abuse her when you see her. I hated to speak of it—to think of it; I let you say that she sent me to you, but it was not true. She can't send anybody anywhere. She is helpless and hurt—awfully hurt—an accident.'

'The girl? Sibyl? She is not hurt?'

'No. Have I not told you enough that she is safe and well?'

'Yes. I beg your pardon. Well? And the woman?'

'She went out last night into the storm; there was a terrible storm there.'

'It was pretty bad here too,' said Mr. Fane, as the other stopped with new doubts.

'She always loved to be in a storm,' said de Courcy. 'She came out into the storm and came for me, and took me out into the empty street. There is a street there wonderfully steep, going down to the river; she would go down it, and as we went, there came a great flash of lightning, as it seemed, upon us, and the thunder crashed straight over us, and she fell.'

'She was struck?'

'I don't know; I suppose not; there is no sign of fire. It may have been the fall. She fell on her back on the steep pavement. All I know is that she lies helpless, she who did everything. She can move neither hand nor foot.'

'Has the doctor seen her?' asked the practical Mr. Fane.

'Yes. He hopes that she will be well again some day. But it is awful to see her lie there helpless—she who had such power. I cannot bear it. And *she* is with her, and nurses her and cares for her as an angel would, she who——' He stopped as if he could say no more, and old Tom Fane wagged his head again and said that the girl was a good girl.

'She is an angel,' said de Courcy, 'an angel of pity.'

'Well, well,' said old Tom with a soothing manner: 'but don't waste your feelings on the other woman. If she is helpless, she can do no more mischief. She is a bad woman.'

'Don't, don't,' cried out de Courcy; 'think what has happened to her.'

'That doesn't alter right and wrong,' said Mr. Fane sturdily. 'She has betrayed her trust and caused most bitter misery. She'll have to answer for it.'

'It was for me,' cried out de Courcy again.

'For you?'

'Yes, for my sake. If you won't spare her because she lies helpless, spare her for my sake; she did all for my sake.' In his excitement he caught hold of old Tom's arms and held them tight. 'Spare her,' he cried.

'Why, what in the world is the woman to you?' asked Mr. Fane with some displeasure, and trying to free his arms from the young man's convulsive grip.

'She is my mother,' said Gabriel, falling on his knees.

(*To be continued.*)



## *At the Sign of the Ship.*

‘**T**HEN, are we Critics of no use in the world?’ Mr. Howells has been asking in *Harper’s Magazine*. He does not appear to be very certain that we are. ‘Perhaps criticism does some good we do not know of,’ he says, in a spirit of agnosticism. ‘They say it does one good,’ murmured Nicholas of ancient days, when he was crossing the Channel in a gale. ‘But,’ he added, ‘I’d rather be done good to some other way.’ This is probably the feeling of many authors. Perhaps criticism does them good. But they would rather be done good to ‘some other way.’ Let me try to point out to the proud race of authors how criticism does them good. In the first place, it stops some of them in their first rush (which is always wild, like a salmon’s) and turns them from a business in which they are of no avail. The present babbler humbly believes that his very earliest criticism of a novel had this valuable effect. The review set forth that there was only one excuse for publishing such a bad novel: the thing might be palliated if the novelist wished to commit a crime on his own account, and then to bring in the novel as proof of insanity. The idea, of course, would not be original, it would be borrowed from *Married beneath Him*. The author then wrote to me, thanking me for the kind frankness of my remarks and the consideration I had obviously bestowed on his work. He asked what intellectual pursuit I would recommend to him. This was how an author should take criticism! I replied that I thought he might have a turn for writing sonnets, and perhaps he had; in any case he did not again invade the shores of old Romance. Here, then, was one good action to the credit of the humble but not absolutely heartbroken Critic.

\* \* \*

Critics do plenty of other good deeds; of course I don’t want to boast, but merely to encourage Mr. Howells. Nobody could

go on being a Critic if he thought the profession useless. For example, the Critic, like Sister Anne, is on a watch-tower, and the public, like Madame de la Barbe-Bleue, is below, anxiously awaiting some new genius.

*Anne, ma sœur Anne, ne vois-tu rien venir ?*

Too often the Critic has to reply, *Je ne vois rien que le soleil qui poudroye, et l'herbe qui verdoye.*

But, once and again, the Critic *does* see somebody coming, somebody not yet visible to the public below. Perhaps it is a company of Woodlanders, marching beneath the Greenwood Tree. Perhaps, through the dust, it is Inkosi-kaas, that glitters yonder, far away. Perhaps it is a boy travelling with a Donkey, or Prince Florestan voyaging from Bohemia, or Master Bultitude running away from Rodwell Regis. Now and again the Critic hears a wandering Minstrel beneath the Tower; the voice is new, the voice is faint, but it is clear and musical. Then do you think that the Critic is not as glad as Sister Anne when she marked the coming of the Dragoon and the Mousquetaire? Sure that Mousquetaire was of M. d'Artagnan's company. This good thing, then, the Critic does or may do; he spies the new genius trudging on, alone and unknown; he welcomes him, he announces him; sometimes it is long before the Public gives a hearing, but the Critic, at least, offers the stranger a chance. Doubtless he is apt to cry the reverse of 'Wolf,'—to cry 'Lamb' (let us say) when there is not really a fresh essayist of that force, or to herald a poet who turns out a poetaster. These blunders will happen, yet does the Critic (to vary the metaphor) fulfil the functions of that watchman who, from afar, beheld the beacon flashing to Mycenæ, across the isles. Without Critics, many a young author might never win a hearing, and many a painter might exhibit in vain.

\* \* \*

A third good that the Critic does (now and then) is not always acknowledged by the author. The Critic induces him to improve his work. Mr. Howells, indeed, says that 'with the youngest and weakest author criticism is quite powerless against his will to do his own work in his own way.' Well, in 1833 Lord Tennyson was a very young, though anything but a 'weak' author. His poems were criticised in a variety of tones, often bumptious and brutal. But criticism was not powerless. Let any one compare, for example, the *Palace of Art* in the edition of 1833, with the *Palace of Art* in the last edition, and both with

the contemporary reviews. Undeniably the poet has taken his Critics' advice. Where are

Isaiah with fierce Ezekiel,  
Swarth Moses by the Coptic sea,  
Plato, Petrarca, Livy, and Raphaël,  
And eastern Confutzee!

Does the Soul any longer, regardless of expense, 'light white streams of dazzling gas'? And where is the famous water-rat? And where is the Man in the balloon who 'takes his flags and waves them to the mob,' and thus opens the *Dream of Fair Women*? Or 'the little room so exquisite'? These and many another thing the Critics disliked have passed quietly away; the Critics were right and the poet knew it. But how the Critics, with that immortal volume of 1833 before them, could see the spots on the dawning sun, or listen for the frogs among the nightingales, does yet amaze a Critic of to-day. They were not many who applauded the new voice, for even Critics are mortal, and often slumberous and stupid. However, some apology has been made for them, poor fellows.

\* \* \*

The first 'Vision of Fair Women' was that of Odysseus in Hades, when he beheld Tyro, Alcmene, and Antiope, Leda, and Chloris, and Phaedra, Procris, and fair Ariadne, and the murderous Eriphyle. What an abundance of legend had Greece, what pitiful stories of fair women were told long before Homer's time! Each name in the list is a tragedy, and there is yet room for a Romance of Hades. As Newton thought himself like a child, gathering shells by the margin of the sea of knowledge, so poets, on the sands of the ocean of Homer, gather here a yellow horn-poppy, and there find a veined jasper, or a fragment of amber. Here follows a *ballade* on a Homeric refrain, and the music, as it were, of a shell picked up on the Homeric beach, and sounding in the ears of later men. I am permitted by the author to publish here the

#### BALLADE OF ASPHODEL.

κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα.

Now who will thread the winding way  
Afar from fervid summer heat,  
Beyond the sunshafts of the day,  
Beyond the blast of winter sleet?

## AT THE SIGN OF THE SHIP.

In the green twilight, dimly sweet,  
Of poplar shades the Shadows dwell,  
Who found erewhile a fair retreat  
Along the mead of asphodel.

There death and birth are one, they say,  
Those lowlands bear no yellow wheat,  
No sound doth rise of mortal fray,  
Of lowing herds, of flocks that bleat ;  
Nor wind nor rain doth blow nor beat,  
Nor shrieketh sword, nor tolleth bell,  
But lovers each the other greet  
Along the mead of asphodel.

I would that there my soul might stray,  
I would my phantom, fleet and fair,  
Might cleave the burden of the clay,  
Might leave the murmur of the street,  
Nor with half-hearted prayer entreat,  
The half-believed-in Gods ; too well  
I know the name I shall repeat  
Along the mead of asphodel.

## ENVOY.

Queen Proserpine, at whose white feet  
In life my love I may not tell,  
Wilt give me welcome when we meet  
Along the mead of asphodel ?

GRAHAM R. TOMSON.

\* \* \*

Among the many good deeds of the Critic (which really enable him, far from desponding like Mr. Howells, to enjoy an approving conscience) might be mentioned his practice of introducing people to books they would not otherwise meet. Does the Psychological Research Society know a book often quoted by Sir Walter Scott, the *Treatises on the Second Sight*, by Theophilus Insulanus ? The book is of 1763, and there is a Glasgow edition of 1819. The motto begins—

*As when a shepherd of the Hebrid isles  
Placed far amid the melancholy main.*

Whose are the lines ? It would be safe to bet seven to four that not one person out of ten will name the author. They do

not sound like verse of the middle of the last century. Some parts of the book were collected, says the author, 'in consequence of a correspondence I had with Sir Richard Steele.' That Christian Hero 'engaged me to search for instances of it' (of second sight) 'well attested, which if I would send him he would improve, to confute those irreligious persons whose system of faith is the same as that of the Sadducees,'—namely, none at all. To convert Sadducees Theophilus Insulanus tells a story out of Pliny, about 'a freedman and other two boys at the university who had their heads polled by a brownie.' I wish brownies were always as obliging. There is another tale of Macleod playing at *tables* with the Steward of St. Kilda. The Steward was puzzled how to make an important move, when he was directed by a bystander ignorant of the game. Macleod was angry, and the bystander explained that a brownie had come in and waved his hand at the pieces and their proper place on the board. This explanation of the bystander's interference does not appear to have struck Macleod as too attenuated. Most of the people who had second sight were named Macleod. Somewhere Fontenelle remarks that early man 'is subject to beholding things that are not there.' So were the people of Skye, but they treasured up the memory of their visions till (no matter how long after) something of the same sort happened. Death was often foreboded by seeing a man apparently dwindle in stature, and then regain his height, something like Mr. Hyde and Dr. Jekyll. The brigands of Greece still divine by means of the shoulder-blade of a sheep or goat. This divination was quite common in Skye in the last century. One has, indeed, no reason to believe that it is not common to this day. Highlanders will still tell one about second-sighted people living yet. Here is a genuine case of Greadach Munro.

MARGARET MORRISON,

a widow of good repute, relates, from what was told her by her father, that a knot of four women being at supper in his house, and having fish set before them in a kneading-trough, one of them, named Greadach Munro, a notable seer, rose on the sudden and threw up her meal. Being inquired about her ailment, she told them, that soon after they began to eat of the fish she saw a little corpse stretched over the trough in his winding-sheet, which disappeared in the twinkling of an eye, upon which she turned sickish, so as she had no stomach to partake further of

what remained of the fish. In a few days thereafter, Donald Chisholm, then tenant in Glendale, going with a child to be baptised at Killmuir, and night coming on in his return, as he came to Doctor Morrison's house, took up his quarters there that night, when the child died before day of a sudden ailment. His father having no timber for his coffin, Doctor Morrison gave him the said trough (not having heard then of the Second Sight about it), which, with a little help of more boards, served for the purpose, and to verify a prediction by the Second Sight, which happened eight or ten days before the completion.

\* \* \*

In the last number of the *Sign of the Ship* we published some verses of M. Joseph Boulmier. By the kindness of Mr. Austin Dobson I am permitted to print M. Boulmier's French version of Mr. Dobson's *villanelle*, 'When I saw you last, Rose' (*Proverbs in Porcelain*, 1877, p. 144). The piece is also in Mr. Dobson's *Old-World Idylls*. Here follows the French, very dainty; the translator this time has not been a traitor:—

#### ROSE.

Vous étiez encor petite,  
Rose, la dernière fois . . .  
Dieu ! que le temps passe vite.

Fleur innocente qu'abrite  
Tendrement l'ombre des bois,  
Vous étiez encor petite.

Et déjà la marguerite  
Va s'effeuillant sous vos doigts . . .  
Dieu ! que le temps passe vite !

Oh, comme se précipite  
La vie. A peine j'y crois . . .  
Vous étiez encor petite.

Dans votre sein qui palpite  
Se glisse un hôte sournois . . .  
Dieu ! que le temps passe vite.

Chez vous Cupidon s'invite :  
Adieu la paix d'autrefois !  
Vous étiez encor petite :  
Dieu ! que le temps passe vite !



If the Critic is to proclaim new books of merit, he should not neglect a volume by Miss Constance Naden. It is *A Modern Apostle, &c.*<sup>1</sup> I have not yet read the *Modern Apostle*, but there is plenty of amusing light verse in '&c.' In *Natural Selection* a scientific sage beholds his adored one carried off by 'a more dandified male,' in accordance with the Darwinian theory of Sexual Selection.

Shall I rage as they whirl in the valse ?  
 Shall I sneer as they carol and coo ?  
 Ah no ! for since Chloe is false  
 I'm certain that Darwin is true !

'Solomon Redivivus, 1886,' though a little long, is also good.

We were a soft Amœba  
 In ages past and gone,  
 Ere you were Queen of Sheba  
 And I King Solomon.

Unconquered, undivided,  
 We lived in happy sloth,  
 And all that you did I did,  
 One dinner nourished both :

Till you incurred the odium  
 Of fissure and divorce—  
 A severed pseudopodium  
 You strayed your lonely course,

which wandered upwards and upwards,

Till from that soft Amœba !  
 In ages past and gone  
 You've grown the Queen of Sheba  
 And I King Solomon.

There are other good things, and good sonnets, in the volume, but *ite ad vendentes*, and purchase for yourselves.

\* \* \*

Concerning *The Doctor and the Slave*, several Correspondents write, 'See Sandy's story in Warburton's *Darien*, chapter ix.' So anybody may see the story, which every one says is most horrible and appalling. A charming fantastic version about Æsculapius has also been sent.

\* \* \*

Another Correspondent has read a tale called 'A Wife's Revenge,' in the Christmas number of *Good Words*, 1873; and

<sup>1</sup> Kegan Paul, Trench, & Co.

he has also read Charles Reade's 'Single Heart and Double Face.' He wants to know how those pieces come to be so very like each other. People interested in coincidences may seek an explanation for themselves.

\* \* \*

An anonymous Correspondent from St. Andrews is respectfully informed that, in the words of Artemus Ward, 'The spirit said NO, with one of the most tremendous knocks I ever experienced.'

ANDREW LANG.

### *The 'Donna.'*

THE EDITOR begs to acknowledge the receipt of the following subscriptions to the 'Donna' Fund. Any sums received after June 11, will be acknowledged in the August number:—Mrs. Hubbard, 10s. Amateur Photographer, 7s. 6d. Mabel Sonneborn, 5s. Edith, 10s. O %, 3s. L. C., 10s.

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